

Labour decides Peres to lead it in polls

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's ruling Labour Party on Sunday overwhelmingly affirmed Prime Minister Shimon Peres as its candidate for prime minister in elections this year, witnesses said. They said Mr. Peres, unchallenged in the party vote, abstained from casting a ballot. Only three people among the hundreds of members of Labour's central committee voted against him. Mr. Peres, a 73-year-old career politician who succeeded assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, has said he wants to stick to the scheduled Oct. 29 election day. Government ministers have said he does not want to do anything that would slow the U.S.-brokered peace talks with Syria. Negotiations on both sides have cited a much-improved negotiating atmosphere. A decision is expected in the Labour Party by mid-February on whether to call for early elections after more Israel-Syria talks and a Middle East shuttle mission by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز بوجسسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الراي.

Assad meets with Lebanese leaders

DAMASCUS (R) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad met on Sunday with Lebanese President Elias Hrawi, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri to discuss latest developments in the region. Presidential spokesman Joubran Kourieh said the meeting was held in the presidential palace of Latakia, some 400 kilometres north of Damascus on the Syrian coast. He said Syrian Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa were also present at the meeting. Syria is Lebanon's main power broker with 35,000 troops based there. The Lebanese leaders' visit comes before Syrian-Israeli peace talks due on Jan. 34 in the United States and after the recent visit of French Foreign Minister Harve de Charette to Syria and Lebanon in which he discussed developments of the peace process.

Volume 21 Number 6129

AMMAN MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 1996, RAMADAN 2, 1416

Price: Jordan 150 Fils

Arafat team scores big win; observers say fair elections

Palestinians elect PLO chairman as their president; Fateh camp dominates council

Combined agency dispatches
PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANISATION (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat won a crushing victory to become the Palestinians' first elected president, in polling which international observers said was fair despite some irregularities.

Supporters of Mr. Arafat's phased strategy for peace with Israel and Palestinian independence also emerged as the big winners in Saturday's parallel elections to a Palestinian council.

But their new self-rule legislature will also count some independent and Islamic opposition voices, and Mr. Arafat's spokesman Marwan Kanafani was a surprise loser in Gaza City.

According to latest figures, election officials said Mr. Arafat won more than 85 per cent of the vote, with sole challenger Samiha Khalil scoring around 10 per cent.

Preliminary indications from the vote for a 88-member self-rule council showed that members of Mr. Arafat's Fateh faction and independents considered close to the movement were building a dominant majority.

Of 52 seats decided, Fateh took 28 while independents

captured 19 and smaller parties the rest.

Five seats went to women, but the announcement of final overall results were delayed until Monday because of missing ballot boxes.

An election official told Reuters the results could be delayed until Monday because of missing ballot boxes.

The official, who declined to be named, said more than 40 boxes from the West Bank district of Hebron were missing. "They have vanished ... most probably the announcement will be delayed until tomorrow," the official said.

Mr. Arafat, 67, revelling in his first popular election, declared the polls "a new era and historic day for the Palestinian people."

"This is the most important step towards a Palestinian state," he said.

But he appeared somewhat embarrassed by his landslide victory. As I told you before, I was looking for 51 per cent only," he said after meeting former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Mr. Carter, the most prominent of some 650 foreign observers at the election, said the poll had gone smoothly despite a few incidents.

"We had some problems in East Jerusalem and in other

88% for Arafat

YASSER ARAFAT won 88.01 per cent of the vote in the Palestinian presidential elections, according to final results announced Sunday.

Central Election Commission Chairman Mahmoud Abbas said Mr. Arafat's sole challenger Samiha Khalil scored 9.03 per cent and 2.6 per cent were blank in Saturday's elections.

places, but the overall results are outstanding and the problems didn't change the choices of voters," he said.

A coalition of 650 foreign election observers also declared the vote fair, saying the election results "can reasonably be regarded as an accurate expression of the will of the voters on polling day."

Eight members of Mr. Arafat's outgoing Palestinian National Authority (PNA) cabinet were elected, including top aide Nabil Shaath, Ahmad Qouriea, a key architect of the autonomy accords with Israel and Saeb Erakat.

But all did not go smoothly for Fateh as its official candidates went down in defeat in a number of races, notably on the West Bank, although

often at the hands of Fateh supporters running as independents.

Other independent voices were also elected, including two militants considered close to the Islamic movement Hamas who won council seats in the Gaza Strip despite the group's official boycott of the polls.

Also elected in Gaza City was Haidar Abdul Shafi, former chief Palestinian negotiator with Israel who broke with Mr. Arafat in protest at his autocratic ways and ran at the head of an opposition National Democratic Coalition.

In Jerusalem, Dr. Abdul Shafi's former spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi, another Arafat critic but a firm supporter of the peace process, was elected.

Turnout was an impressive 93 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 75 per cent in the West Bank in a popular rejection of the boycott calls by Islamic and left-wing opponents of the peace process.

While the election was unanimously seen as a huge vote of confidence for Mr. Arafat and his step-by-step strategy for peace with Israel and Palestinian independence, concerns remain about his ability to lead a democra-



Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, an observer of Saturday's Palestinian elections, with victorious Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Gaza on Sunday (Reuter photo)

tic regime.

During nearly four decades as a hunted guerrilla leader, Mr. Arafat developed a highly secretive and often haphazard style of governing and there have been numerous complaints of inefficiency, and authoritarianism within the PNA.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres hailed the success of the elections as a vote for peace, but insisted that an independent Palestinian state was not in the cards.

"We are at the origins of the Oslo process (for autonomy). It is a choice which we freely made and the process has its limits," he said.

Mr. Peres, who succeeded assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November, said the election was for Israel a big step for peace.

"The vote wasn't only to elect the representatives of the Palestinians but effectively also confirmed that a decisive majority of the Palestinians backs the agreements,"

said Mr. Peres.

"As far as we are concerned, I see it as a step on the road of us not governing the Palestinians. We don't want to. About the future solution, I think we have to invest more thoughts," he told reporters.

In the West Bank city of Ramallah independent candidate Abdul Jawad Saleh, a former mayor exiled by Israel for 20 years and a strong critic of Mr. Arafat's manner of governing, gained a seat.

In East Jerusalem, claimed by both Israel and Palestinians as their capital, turnout was only 35 per cent of some 75,000 registered voters.

Palestinian and international observers alike blamed a heavy-handed Israeli police presence around polling stations in the Arab sector of the Holy City for keeping voters away.

The election went off with few incidents, although in

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Fateh sweeps polls but independents also gain

By Lamis K. Andoni
in East Jerusalem

YASSER ARAFAT's Fateh group has swept two-thirds of the 88 seats in the Palestinian self-rule council in Saturday's elections characterised by the absence of a real challenging opposition and a strong show of women candidates who captured seven seats.

Outspoken independent personalities like Dr. Haidar Abdul Shafi, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi and former Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Executive Committee member Abdul Jawad Saleh secured some of highest votes in Gaza City, East Jerusalem and Ramallah respectively.

The strong independents are expected to join hands with three women from smaller Palestinian groups — Zahira Kamal of the Palestinian Democratic Union (FIDA), Rana Nashashibi

from the Palestinian People's Party (PPP), both of whom represent Jerusalem, and Rawiyah Shawa, an independent columnist from Gaza, to form an independent parliamentary bloc.

Fateh winners, however, are not expected to act as a unified bloc in the self-rule council, especially that the elections reinforced divisions within the main Fateh movement.

Although all traditional Fateh leaders who returned from the diaspora in over the last year emerged victorious across the West Bank and Gaza, a new younger generation also showed strength, particularly in the West Bank.

Among the Fateh leaders elected to the council are Ahmad Qouriea who negotiated the first Oslo agreement, Abbas Zaki, who was in charge of military operations within Fateh, Nabil

Shaath, the chief Palestinian negotiator, Al Tayeb Abdul Rahim, former ambassador to Jordan, and Rafik Al Natsh, a veteran Fateh Central Committee member.

Fateh candidates who defied the official list and ran as independents secured the highest votes in Ramallah and Bethlehem.

Independents in the council will not be able to exert any meaningful pressure without forming alliances with some of the less conformist Fateh deputies who have publicly criticised the terms of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements and the Palestinian National Authority's handling of the press and human rights.

But at least half of the council members are expected to fully back Mr. Arafat's policies. Political analysts here say that even a

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World leaders fete PLO chief

Combined agency dispatches

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher were among the first world leaders to congratulate Yasser Arafat on the Palestinians' first general election.

Officials in Gaza City and Paris said the leaders telephoned Mr. Arafat after his triumph in the presidential polls.

French officials said President Chirac telephoned Arafat to express his "warm congratulations" shortly after the election results were announced.

In a letter he added: "Through your person the Palestinian people have clearly chosen peace, stability and economic progress in the Middle East," the officials said.

In Washington the White House said it was "very encouraged" by the elections. "We are very encouraged by the active campaigning and very extensive preparations for the elections," a White House spokeswoman said.

"We see the election as an important opportunity to lay the foundations for democratic government and promote the foundation for a regional peace," she said.

The European Union said the results "justly rewarded" Mr. Arafat's peace efforts. "On behalf of the European Union, I am delighted to send you my warmest congratulations upon your election as president of the Palestinian council," Italy's caretaker Prime Minister Lamberto Dini said in a message to Mr. Arafat.

Rome currently holds the six-month EU presidency.

"Your contribution to the Middle East peace process and your unwavering commitment to the Palestinian people and their well-being have been justly rewarded ... my colleagues and I look forward to working with you in the future."

"That demonstrates very well the shakiness of the foundations of the self-rule

establishment and on the other hand the legitimacy of the combatant groups among the people of Palestine."

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said Mr. Arafat's victory was a milestone in the Middle East peace process.

In a telegram to Mr. Arafat, he said the election would strengthen democracy as well as economic and social development in the Palestinian areas.

"The Palestinian people have demonstrated their political maturity through the high voter turnout," Mr. Kinkel added.

The Arab League praised the Palestinian elections, but expressed sympathy for striking refugees in the diaspora who feel they have been ignored in the peace process with Israel.

The vote for an 88-member self-rule council and president "is an important aspect in strengthening self-determination for the Palestinian people," Deputy Secretary General Kamal Said told journalists in Cairo.

It will "give a push to upcoming final status negotiations and the important issue of Palestinian refugees abroad," Mr. Kamal said.

He said the league "understands the strike by Palestinians in the refugee camps of Lebanon and Syria who are committed to their right to return which is one of the keys to a complete and just peace in the region."

Mr. Kamal also congratulated Mr. Arafat for his landslide victory, adding his "hope that the peace process continues under his leadership."

President Mubarak telephoned Mr. Arafat to congratulate him and to wish the Palestinian people progress and prosperity.

The elections were a "historic step towards the Palestinian people practising their legitimate political and national rights and towards creating an independent state on their soil," a foreign ministry statement said in Cairo.

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Bahrain unrest continues despite military warning

MANAMA (Agencies) —

Dissidents in Bahrain pursued small scale protests overnight in defiance of a warning that the military might intervene to halt the unrest "once and for all," residents said on Sunday.

They said they heard loud blasts apparently caused by exploding gas cylinders in the early hours of Sunday.

The residents also said some people, including young Shiite clerics, had been arrested on Saturday night.

"There were blasts, small fires but no clashes last night," said one resident who asked not to be named. "Many people had been arrested in the past three nights including young clerics."

A government official contacted by Reuters said he had no immediate comment on the latest disturbances.

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Bahraini ambassador pays tribute to Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — Bahraini

Ambassador to Jordan Mohammad Al Musallam on Sunday praised Jordan's position on the unrest in Bahrain, stressing that the Kingdom's stand was a clear manifestation of the distinguished relations between the Jordanian and Bahraini peoples and the leaderships of the two countries.

In an interview with the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Mr. Musallam said Bahrain highly appreciates the Jordanian stand and "Jordanian sympathy with their brethren in Bahrain in such circumstances."

He said the Bahraini emir, Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifah, and the Bahraini people realise that the Jordanian leadership, government

and people would spare no effort in supporting Bahrain's security and stability.

The ambassador stressed that Jordan's position vis-a-vis the unrest in Bahrain, as reflected in a statement issued by Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti on Saturday, was based on its pan-Arab principles.

Mr. Kabariti on Saturday condemned the political unrest in Bahrain, calling it an attempt to "destabilise the security and stability" of the country.

In a statement carried by Petra, Mr. Kabariti expressed Jordan's solidarity with Bahrain in its efforts to quell the disturbances.

The minister said Jordan

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Enthusiasm in Jordan, but Hamas rejects Arafat win

By Jack Redden

Reuters

AMMAN — Palestinians in Jordan's largest refugee camp praised PLO leader Yasser Arafat's election win on Sunday but the rival Hamas organisation dismissed his overwhelming margin as weak support.

Ibrahim Ghosheh, spokesman for the Hamas group that boycotted Saturday's vote in which Mr. Arafat won 85 per cent support to be president, said hundreds of thousands of Palestinians refused to participate.

"That means what Arafat got is about 50 per cent of those who could vote in the occupied territories," Mr. Ghosheh told Reuters.

If the millions of Palestinian refugees beyond the borders who could not vote were included, Mr. Ghosheh said, Mr. Arafat received "not more than 20 per cent"

of the potential vote. "Hamas has proved it is credible," he said. "Hamas will continue to oppose the Oslo agreement, especially in the coming period when there will be difficult questions for the Palestinians."

Mr. Arafat will administer areas of the West Bank and Gaza freed of Israeli occupation while he negotiates a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the next three years. That includes tricky issues like control of Arab East Jerusalem.

In contrast to the Hamas view, Palestinians crowding the markets in Baqaa, Jordan's largest refugee camp with more than 100,000 people, were enthusiastic. They praised the man who had come to embody the struggle for a Palestinian state.

"Mr. Arafat, he is like God," said Ali Mahmoud Salahat, a refugee from the 1967 Middle East war. "He

has worked from the start to the end for Palestinians."

Jamal, a young man who traces his refugee roots to the 1948 war that created Israel, dismissed Mr. Ghosheh's view that Mr. Arafat would not have received support from Palestinian refugees: "People love Arafat, inside, outside (Palestine)."

AFP adds: Hamas warned Mr. Arafat and his leadership against trying to muzzle the opposition.

"We warn the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) not to delude itself with this false victory and be tempted, contrary to the Oslo (peace) accord, to muzzle, diminish or suppress the opposition, notably Islamic," Mr. Ghosheh told AFP.

Mr. Ghosheh said: "No force could isolate or annihilate the role of Hamas, which remains committed to its programme of resistance and jihad against Israel."

Baghdad wants oil talks to succeed — French deputy

BAGHDAD (Agencies) —

Iraq is determined talks with the United Nations on limited oil sales will succeed, visiting French Member of Parliament Jean-Bernard Raimond said on Sunday.

He told Reuters that he sensed a willingness on the part of Iraqi officials he met, including President Saddam Hussein, not to let the talks fail.

"I think the Iraqi authorities are, without ambiguity, all for these conversations (talks)," said Mr. Raimond at the end of a six-day visit to Baghdad.

Iraq said on Saturday it was ready to negotiate with the U.N. the terms allowing it oil sales worth \$2 billion over six months to pay for urgent humanitarian needs.

It asked U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali to decide the date and venue for the talks.

Mr. Raimond said: "I

think this exchange of letters between the U.N. secretary general and Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz is a step which is positive."

"I think they (Iraqis) are willing to go ahead with these conversations (talks) as envisaged by the exchange of letters."

Trade sanctions were slapped on oil-rich Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The U.N. offered the limited oil sales to erase the hardship caused by the sanctions but Iraq strongly objected to the terms attached to the sales, calling them a violation of its sovereignty.

The Iraqi media, tightly controlled by the government, on Saturday played down any suggestion Iraq had made concessions to get Dr. Ghali to enter talks.

Mr. Raimond, a former French foreign minister, was given a red carpet welcome in Baghdad. He met with Presi-

dent Saddam for three hours on Saturday and also held talks with other ministers.

Of his meeting with President Saddam, he said: "It was a very long meeting. It was a review of the internal politics and the present situation."

Mr. Raimond and three other French deputies arrived in Baghdad on Tuesday. They visited Iraq's southern provinces, hardest hit by the sanctions.

France has been pressuring Iraq to accept the U.N.'s oil offer. Iraq's official media said on Sunday Paris was committed to a total lifting of the oil embargo on Iraq.

France, hoping to resume its lucrative trade with Iraq, would like to see the oil ban lifted once Iraq complies with U.N. resolutions demanding that its weapons of mass destruction be destroyed.

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Arafat 'the Phoenix' reborn as president of Palestinian people

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Yasser Arafat's overwhelming victory in Palestinian presidential elections crowned four decades of single-minded struggle to become the uncontested symbol of the Palestinians' quest for an identity and a homeland.

"I am a Phoenix reborn from the ashes," Mr. Arafat has repeated over the years each time he has brushed up against political or physical annihilation at the hands of Israeli and Arab opponents alike.

The phrase bears witness to the remarkable resilience and endurance of the guerrilla-turned-politician who at 66 has confirmed at the ballot box his place as a respected and respectable partner on the world stage.

Abu Ammar — the nom de guerre by which he is universally known among the Palestinian people — or "Khayyar" (the old one) as he is called by his entourage, has led the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) since 1968.

Since returning from exile in July 1994 to head the self-rule Palestinian National Authority in Gaza City, he has been received as a head of state in capitals around the world, always clothed in his trademark military uniform and checked headscarf.

A visionary for some, a power-hungry manipulator for others, the diminutive, balding politician has repeatedly found himself isolated politically only to recover strengthened, most recently following his ill-fated support for Iraq during the 1991 Gulf war.

Stripped of his backers in the Gulf and the collapsed Soviet Union and threatened with marginalisation by the home-grown intifada in the Israeli-occupied territories, Mr. Arafat entered into secret peace negotiations with Israel in 1993 in Oslo.

In a turnaround only a consummate political operator could survive, the same Arafat who belittled the offer of Palestinian autonomy included in the 1978 Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt as "less than a Bantustan" agreed 15 years later to a more limited version of self-rule.

Such opportunism has earned Mr. Arafat the enmity of many former Arab and Palestinian allies, from long-time aides turned friendly opposition to hardline opponents committed to foiling his plans at any price.

But Mr. Arafat, backed by determined international support, succeeded in imposing a step-by-step rhythm for the peace process on a hopeful Palestinian people, fuelling in the process a Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty and prompting a resumption of Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

Helped by a carefully crafted aura of mystery and intrigue, Mr. Arafat has mastered the art of always appearing convinced that he is and has always been right.

"I will never be the one who bargains away Jerusalem," he responds to critics who accuse him of abandoning Arab claims to the Holy City as the price for peace with Israel. "I haven't made any concession," he insists, while pursuing give-and-take negotiations with his Israeli counterparts.

But for Mr. Arafat, now that he has received for the first time the legitimacy accorded by universal suffrage, the hardest may be yet to come.

In May his Palestinian council must begin "final status" negotiations on the future of East Jerusalem and the rest of the Palestinian territories, wading into his next, and possibly last, battle for the Palestinian cause he has embodied for so long.

'Deposed emir holds large Qatari assets'

DUBAI (R) — Qatar's deposed emir has control of a substantial portion of the oil and gas-rich country's financial reserves but this will not have any impact on its economic development, its foreign minister said.

"Yes, there is cash in the name of the previous emir," Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Ben Jibr Al Thani told the weekly Middle East Economic Digest.

"But this can't affect our progress and projects. Our country is a rich country," he said, according to a report in the daily Gulf News from Doha of the interview.

"All the projects we are doing have been studied and are feasible. We are financing these projects from international banks. We don't have any problems about proceeding with these projects. There is a cash problem, but this is not that big a problem. It will not eliminate our movement in the economic sector in Qatar."

The Gulf News report did not specify how much cash was involved or when or how it was transferred.

Qatar makes about \$3.5 billion a year from exports, two thirds of which are accounted for by its small OPEC oil output quota. The

first of its ambitious and costly projects to export its vast gas reserves is due to come on stream by the turn of the century.

The deposed emir, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani, was in Switzerland last June when his son, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, seized power in a bloodless palace coup.

The former emir returned to the Gulf last month and has been touring Arab states stressing that he was still the legitimate ruler and seeking support for his return to power.

Gulf Arab leaders have accorded him receptions befitting a head of state.

On Friday Sheikh Khalifa arrived in Oman from Syria. His son angered Oman and the four other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) last month by boycotting the closing ceremonies of their annual summit because of a dispute over how they chose the group's next secretary-general.

The foreign minister also said Qatar, whose North Field is the world's largest single concentration of natural gas, would soon announce projects with foreign companies in the petrochemical sector worth \$500 million to \$1 billion. He did not give details.

PNC members in Amman welcome return home but oppose changing national charter

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Members of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) on Sunday welcomed an invitation by Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to all PNC members, including those who oppose the Palestinian-Israeli autonomy accords, to return to the self-rule areas. But they said it was too early to discuss annulling the Palestinian national charter that calls for the elimination of the Jewish state.

Mr. Peres told reporters on Saturday all PNC members were welcome to return to the West Bank and Gaza Strip to take part in discussions of the newly-elected Palestinian self-rule council to amend the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) charter.

The abrogation of the charter is a prerequisite for further talks between Israel and the Palestinian National

Authority on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza.

"The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine supports the return of all PNC members and calls for the return of all displaced Palestinians and Palestinian refugees to the Palestinian territories," said Tayseer Qubas, the deputy chairman of the PNC. "We are happy to go back but we oppose any change in the Palestinian national charter before all Palestinians secure the right to self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," added Mr. Qubas.

The head of the Islamic Jihad-Beit Al Maqdis, Asaad Bayoud Al Tamimi, who opposes any peace deal with Israel and calls for the elimination of Israel, told the Jordan Times that he received a telephone call from Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Sunday confirming that all PNC members would

be able to return to the Palestinian territories by the second half of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

"We are happy with this," said Sheikh Tamimi. "Al Jihad organisation welcomes this development but it is too early to talk about changing the national charter. We oppose any step in this direction."

A relative of Abdul Hameed Al Sayeh, the 87-year-old chairman of the PNC who submitted his resignation from the PNC when the PLO and Israel launched their self-rule deal, said that Sheikh Sayeh reserved comment on the issue "before receiving an official offer for his return."

The relative, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that if such an invitation was received, "the answer would be positive."

Saleh Bargouthi, a severe critic of the autonomy accord, said he would be happy to return to the self-

rule areas but that the final decision of his return should come after "careful thinking and discussion with other members of the PNC in Amman."

Bahjat Abu Gharbiyah, a leftist member of the PNC, said he believes that any Palestinian who could return to the Palestinian territories should not hesitate to do that.

"Members of the PNC have the right to go back. But personally I will not return because this return is conditional on support for the elimination of some articles in the national charter," added Mr. Abu Gharbiyah.

He said that the self-rule council had no right to remove any article from the national charter without the approval of the PNC. "Therefore if any session of the PNC should take place to discuss this issue, it should not be in the self-rule areas under Israeli occupation."

Egypt Brotherhood gets a new leader in difficult situation

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's most powerful fundamentalist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, has taken on a "dynamic" new leader as the group bids to recover from a year of a government repression.

Mustapha Mashour, billed in the press as a Brotherhood hardliner, was confirmed as the group's "supreme guide" after the death of his long-ailing predecessor on Saturday, Brotherhood spokesman Maamun Al Hodeibi said.

Mr. Mashour immediately underlined his group's rejection of violence in its bid to establish Islamic rule in Egypt, telling AFP: "We will continue our call by all available means without breaking the law or constitution."

He said the Brotherhood, banned since 1954, would seek to form a political party, which would be its first since its foundation in 1928.

Mr. Mashour led over 2,000 mourners who turned out for the funeral of his predecessor, Muhammad Hamed Abu Al Nasr, who died at the age of 83 on Saturday after several weeks in a coma.

Under a heavy police presence, the ceremony was subdued with no slogans chanted as Abu Al Nasr, Brotherhood head since 1986, was laid to rest in a Cairo cemetery.

Mr. Mashour, 75, who virtually ran the Brotherhood in the past few years due to Abu Al Nasr's failing health, now takes centre stage to deal with a series of blows dealt the group by the government.

Fifty-four Brotherhood members, including its most important young leaders, were sentenced to up to five years in prison last November and its headquarters were shut by police.

The group was also crushed in legislative elections in November and December, saying it was a victim of government repression to bar it from parliament.

Arrests of dozens of Brotherhood cadres, beginning last January, marked the end of a 20-year truce with the government, which tolerated the group after it said it renounced violence in the mid-1970s.

The crackdown came after

President Hosni Mubarak accused the Brotherhood of backing a campaign of Muslim militant violence which has left 940 dead in Egypt since 1992.

But the new leader said: "We will not turn to violence and we hope that God will allow an opening between us and (the government) to put an end to the injustice of which we have been victims."

Mr. Mashour ruled out calls by younger Brotherhood members for a violent campaign to face government repression, saying: "We will continue on the moderate path and not follow the unconsidered enthusiasm of the young."

He backed a bid by young Brotherhood officials to create a new political party, called Al Wasat (centre), which he said would be the Brotherhood's "political face" (to) allow us to have a newspaper and headquarters."

The government press has accused Mr. Mashour of coming from the "extremist" branch of the Brotherhood, pointing to his early years in the group's military wing and his three arrests.

Mr. Mashour, who joined the group in 1938, was first imprisoned in 1948 and then again in 1954 for 10 years in connection with a reported attempt to kill former president Gamal Abdul Nasser.

His third prison term lasted from 1964 until he was released in a general amnesty of Brotherhood members by then-President Anwar Sadat in 1972.

But one expert cast doubt on Mr. Mashour bringing a "more extremist" stance to the organisation, saying he would only be "more dynamic" after the ailing Abu Al Nasr.

"I doubt there will be much change in the Brotherhood strategy. They have been trying to weather the storm of government repression and cut their losses," Diaa Rashwan, a member of the Al Ahram Centre for Political Studies, said.

Mr. Mashour "realises the Brotherhood must have flexibility if they do not want to face 20 years of rebuilding" after the government's campaign against them, Mr. Rashwan said.

U.N. book reflects on experience of Somalis

NEW YORK (U.N.) — The United Nations operation in Somalia, the first time peacekeepers ventured into a failed state, was one of the most complex and intensely debated in the organisation's history.

In the United Nations and Somalia, 1992-1996, the eighth volume of the "Blue Books" series published last week by the Department of Public Information, Secretary-General Boutros Ghali offers his account of the United Nations' experience in Somalia in an extensive introduction.

While the United Nations succeeded in ending the war-induced famine which ravaged the country in 1992, the operation also made clear the limitations of a combined peacekeeping, peace enforcement and humanitarian mission in a situation where the resolve to reconcile political differences is weak.

Above all, Somalia highlighted the urgent need for the international community to consider the mechanisms through which it can respond when all systems of government collapse and a country ceases to function as a state.

As the secretary-general writes, "At the present time, the international community does not seem to have the will or the resources to intervene effectively in support of a failed state."

In terms of present day Somalia, the secretary-general states, "The situation... will continue to deteriorate until the political will exists among the parties to reach a peaceful solution to their dispute, or until the international community gives itself new instruments to address the phenomenon of a failed state."

Despite the circumstances which prevented the operation — the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I and II and the United States-led Unified Task Force — from carrying out its mandate fully, the United Nations can take considerable satisfaction in having curbed the rampant violence and saved countless lives, states the secretary-general.

By the time the last of the UNOSOM II forces departed in March 1995, the acute phase of the emergency in Somalia had been overcome and the scale of fighting and

insecurity were significantly reduced. The health and nutritional status of the population had improved significantly, contrasting with the situation at the peak of the crisis in 1992, when some 3,000 Somalis were dying from starvation everyday. Thanks to the work of the organisation, its agencies and non-governmental organisation partners, schools have reopened, health centres are functioning and economic activity, particularly in the vital agricultural sector, has begun to revive.

In addition to the introduction, The United Nations and Somalia, 1992/1996, contains more than 100 documents, including:

— Resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council;

— Reports and previously unpublished correspondence of the Secretary-General;

— Political agreements reached by the Somalia parties; and

— International appeals, plans of action and other materials related to the efforts of the United Nations and non-governmental organisations to provide emergency famine relief and humanitarian assistance.

The book also features a detailed chronology of events.

The "Blue Books" series covers major developments of the past five decades in which the United Nations has played a leading role. The series is designed to provide primary research tools to historians, policy makers, journalists and others interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the work of the organisation.

The first book in the series, The United Nations and Apartheid, 1948-1994, was published in December 1994. Also available are the United Nations and Cambodia, 1991-1995, the United Nations and Nuclear Non-Proliferation, The United Nations and El Salvador, 1990-1995, The United Nations and Mozambique, 1992-1995, the Advancement of Women, 1945-1995, and the United Nations and Human Rights, 1945-1995. The United Nations and the Iraq-Kuwait Conflict, 1990-1996 is expected to be published in the first half of this year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Arab League to send observer to Sudan elections

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League will send a single official to oversee presidential and parliamentary elections in Sudan set for early March, league sources said on Sunday. League head Esmat Abdul Meguid told reporters he had declined a Sudanese invitation to come personally to attend the vote, but said he would send Deputy Secretary General Ahmad Ben Helli as an observer. League sources said the pan-Arab body would send only Mr. Ben Helli and not an entire team to member-state Sudan. Khartoum asked the league in early January to send a team of observers for the vote, the first under the regime of President Omar Bashir who came to power in a 1989 coup. The league sent 34 officials to oversee Algerian presidential elections in November, after which Dr. Abdul Meguid announced the league's readiness to "respond to any Arab country's request" for observers from the organisation.

Policeman kills vote counter in West Bank

NABLUS (AFP) — A Palestinian policeman shot and killed an election worker counting votes in a village near here late Saturday for historic Palestinian elections, police officials said Sunday. Police said Iyad Shatayeh, 25, a member of the Palestinian preventive security police, opened fire on election workers after he was ordered out of the polling station in Salem, a village of 6,000 east of Nablus. Witnesses said Mr. Shatayeh came back with a gun and shot Hashem Nassar, 31, who died on the spot. Mr. Shatayeh fled following the shooting and was arrested by Palestinian police early Sunday, police said. It was the only deadly incident reported during Saturday's elections of a Palestinian president and self-rule legislature. They said the incident did not appear to be politically motivated.

Explosion in Egypt oilfield kills two

CAIRO (R) — Two people were killed and two wounded in an explosion caused by a technical fault in Egypt's Murjan oilfield, ministry sources said on Sunday. They said the explosion took place four kilometres south of Ras Ghareb in the Red Sea. The oil ministry sources declined to give details on what caused the default in the Murjan oilfield of the Gulf Suez Petroleum Company, but they ruled out sabotage. The official Al Ahram newspaper quoted an Interior Ministry statement as saying the explosion was caused by a failure in the water injection equipment used to drill the oil.

Libyan spy chief in Sweden hospital

STOCKHOLM (R) — The head of Libyan military intelligence is being treated for a serious liver illness in a Swedish hospital, according to Swedish officials and Western diplomatic sources. Sweden's foreign ministry was quoted in a Stockholm daily newspaper earlier last week as confirming that Khoulidi Hamidi was being treated in a Stockholm hospital. The diplomatic sources told Reuters Mr. Hamidi is the head of Libya's military intelligence service although there was a possibility he may have been replaced recently. Mr. Hamidi is a member of the three-man general provisional committee for defence which heads Libya's army. A delegation of at least a dozen Libyan officials and their families were staying in a Stockholm hotel, the sources added. The Libyans had received visas for a month and had been in Sweden for about two weeks, they added. The gravity of Mr. Hamidi's illness was not clear although he was being treated for a liver disease, the sources said.

Iran to mediate Afghan-Pak conflict

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran is to launch efforts to restore relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan at the request of their two governments. Deputy Foreign Minister Alaeddin Boroujerdi announced Sunday. Mr. Boroujerdi, who heads his country's bid to broker peace in Afghanistan, said Iranian officials were to hold talks with Pakistani and Afghan counterparts in the "near future to work out ways" to reconcile Kabul and Islamabad. The mediation effort will be in response to "appeals" from both sides, he told the official Iranian news agency IRNA. Relations between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan have soured in the past months. Islamabad has described the government of Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani as "illegitimate" while Kabul accuses Pakistan of interfering in its internal affairs and supporting the Islamic opposition, the Taliban militia, which is besieging Kabul seeking to overthrow the government.

27 killed in renewed Somalia fighting

MOGADISHU (R) — At least 27 people were killed and 32 wounded in renewed fighting between rival militias in southwest Somalia, witnesses said on Sunday. Clashes which started early last week erupted again on Saturday when the Rahanweini Resistance Army (RRA) counter-attacked against the forces of the self-proclaimed president, Mohammad Farah Aided, in the Huddur area. The RRA had recovered ground, a spokesman said, denying it had suffered many casualties. Radio North Mogadishu, which supports Gen. Aided's clan rival, Ali Mahdi Muhammad, said 50 Aided fighters had been killed and 73 wounded. It said five RRA men were killed and 15 wounded. Witnesses gave a casualty toll of 27 dead and 32 wounded, without making clear from which side.

Kabul offers Ramadan truce to opponents

ISLAMABAD (R) — The embattled Afghan government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani offered a ceasefire to its opponents on Sunday to mark the Holy Month of Ramadan, the official Kabul Radio said. The broadcast, monitored in Islamabad, asked opposition factions to cease fighting and open land routes to the besieged Afghan capital of Kabul.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:30 Bonkers (cartoon)
14:30 Richie Rich
15:00 Playhouse
15:15 Bustle Loose
15:40 Doc — Annals of the Mediterranean
16:00 Voyagers
17:00 Ordy
17:30 Les Comagnons de L'Adventure
17:59 Magazine — C'Est Pas Sorcier
Family Programme — L'Ecole de Paris
19:00 News in French
19:15 Magazine — Science
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 You Bet Your Life
20:00 Clive Anderson (doc.)
20:25 Hawaii Five-O
21:15 Police drama — GC-1
22:00 News in English
22:25 Drama — I'll Take Manhattan
23:15 Feature film: Bed and Breakfast

PRAYER TIMES

06:10 Fajr
06:30 Sunrise (Sabbat) Dhuhr

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swithest, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637460
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 623666
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
St. Ann International Church Tel. 652526
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Skiier will be partly cloudy with a chance for scattered showers in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom, and winds westerly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be sunny with winds northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp. 1/16
Amman 7/17
Aqaba 7/17
Deserts 0/11
Jordan Valley 8/16

Yesterday's high temperature: Amman 11, Aqaba 18. Humidity readings: Amman 66 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Melkies Halasa 819220
Dr. Bassam Karadseh 759200
Dr. Mounir Al Qasbi 799599
Dr. Abdul Wahab Awad 846070
Ferdous pharmacy 78336
Al Asena pharmacy 637035
Nairokh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairokh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741
Aidous pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Ghassan Al Fagih 906130
Khalifah pharmacy 985417

FOOD CONTROL CENTRE 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate

Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617191
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 886390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 665800
Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6

Akileh Maternity, J. Amn 64241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 689131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musader Hospital 66727/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/71
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Abdali 775112/6
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 686100
Amal Hospital 607755
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ybn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)255555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272775
Al Ba Nafes Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:20 Sanaa (RJ)
08:00 Damascus (RJ)
08:30 New Delhi (RJ)
09:25 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:35 Beirut (RJ)
10:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
10:45 Casablanca (RJ)
17:20 Cairo (RJ)
19:00 Bangkok (RJ)
19:00 Tunis (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

04:40 Rome (AZ)
05:45 Khartoum (SD)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 every Monday
Arr. Damascus

Dep. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Arr. Amman 7:30 a.m. every Sunday

Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 700/500
Banana 650/650
Banana (Mukannam) 580/580
Banana (imported) 850/700
Cabbage 80/30
Carrot 200/140
Cauliflower 150/100
Cucumbers (large) 250/150
Cucumbers (small) 450/320
Eggplant 220/120
Garlic 900/700
Grape Fruit 220/150
Lemon 340/220
Marrow (large) 80/50
Marrow (small) 180/100
Onion (green) 180/100
Onion (dry) 220/150
Orange 580/450
Pepper (hot) 540/360
Pepper (sweet) 540/360
Potato 240/180
Radish 130/80
String Beans 520/400
Spinach 150/80
Tomato 130/80



Princess Basma launches Ramadan charity campaign

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Sunday opened the annual Ramadan charity campaign to collect donations and distribute them to the needy families in Jordan with the help of some 6,000 boy scouts and girl guides.

The campaign, which is spearheaded by the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF), will last throughout the month of Ramadan in various governorates.

Princess Basma said on the occasion that Jordanian citizens have been showing increasing interest in the annual campaign and are offering more and more in-kind and financial donations to the poor in a genuine show of social solidarity among the Jordanian society.

Thousands of needy families in Jordan are benefiting from these donations, which are distributed through the QAF centres in the country, said the Princess who recognised the donations by

merchants, businessmen and various industrial and commercial businesses.

QAF Executive Director Awni Bashir said that the campaign stems from the concept of social solidarity and religious teachings which call for helping the poor, adding that funds collected through the campaign will help fund small size production projects for needy families who undertake training courses in various trades, enabling them to earn a living.

He said that part of the donations will be used to finance emergency medical services and buy medicines for ill people, adding that the campaign, which is being implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, also involves a number of volunteers in addition to the scouts and guides.

The donation collectors carry specially marked boxes to collect donations from people at homes, in the streets or at places of work.

Deputies criticise government practices against journalists; ministers reject charges

By Tareq Momani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government Sunday came under criticism from a number of Parliament members over its information and foreign policies as well as alleged wrong practices against Jordanian journalists.

Leftist deputy Khalil Haddadin charged during a regular session of the Lower House of Parliament that "the government has been lowering the ceiling of democracy in various aspects of Jordanian life," saying the way the government has been dealing with the press will have negative consequences on the whole democratic process.

Saying that "the government has been cracking

down on chief editors of opposition papers," Mr. Haddadin cited the case of Fahd Rimawi, the editor of the weekly Al Majd, who, he said, has been facing trial at the criminal court for publishing an article by a Bahraini writer expressing his personal views towards the government in his country and demanding the dismissal of the director of the political intelligence department who is British.

"Why did not the Minister of Information sue the editor of a daily newspaper for publishing an article of an Iraqi writer who attacked the Libyan president?" asked Mr. Haddadin.

The deputy demanded that the minister of information stop dealing with

similar questions in two different criteria, demanding that the government "either sue the editor of the local daily or withdraw the case against Al Majd's editor."

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh rejected the deputy's remarks, saying that referring cases to the judiciary to judge cases is an embodiment of democracy.

Denying that the government was cracking down on the editors of the weekly opposition papers, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information Khaled Karaki said that newspapers have to abide by the Press and Publications Law and whenever there is a violation of the law the case is referred to

courts.

The minister said the government cannot withdraw the case raised against the editor of Al Majd weekly.

Dr. Karaki said that he "took pride in the local press despite the differences in views between the ministry and the newspapers."

Deputy Hammam Saeed, a member of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), charged that the Ministry of Information and its organs have failed to properly report the assassination of Hamas activist Yahya Ayash, whose funeral was attended by thousands of people. But, he said, the official media gave full attention to the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak

Rabin.

Leftist deputy Toujan Faisal criticised a statement by Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti over the situation in Bahrain.

"The statement is an interference in other countries' internal affairs," said Ms. Faisal, who expressed the view that such statements can negatively affect Jordan's relations with other nations.

In his statement Saturday, Mr. Kabariti condemned the political unrest in Bahrain, voicing Jordan's total support for the Bahraini government in quelling the rioting and the acts of violence. He said that terrorists acts are to be deplored wherever they might come from and regardless of any justifica-

tion and the forces behind them.

Irbid deputy Talal Obeidat raised the question of the Al Wihdeh Dam, saying that the dam has not yet been built even though plans for its construction are ready.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat said that Jordan and Syria had reached agreement on constructing the dam but the delays are due to political circumstances.

"The studies are ready but the project is linked to political developments in the region," said the minister.

During the session deputies also endorsed 44 articles of the Parliament's internal by-laws.

Meeting to discuss family medicine, propose Arab specialists' society

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordanian and foreign physicians are expected to discuss community medicine, management of primary health care services, continued medical training and other related topics during a three-day conference in Amman scheduled in May.

According to conference spokesperson Mohammad Halalsheh, the conference will be the first such to be organised in Jordan and will be conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

It aims at highlighting the importance of family medicine at the national level and a plan for com-

prehensive medical care for all persons within a family. Dr. Halalsheh said.

Another aim is to reduce the financial burden on the individual as well as on the state's medical institutions, he said.

The conference is expected to attract about 150 doctors involved or interested in family medicine in Jordan and delegates from several Arab and foreign countries, he added.

Dr. Halalsheh said that during the conference the participants plan to propose the creation of an Arab society of specialists in family medicine.

Jordanian-Syrian committee to meet in Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — A Jordanian-Syrian technical committee is expected to meet in Amman early next month to discuss means of promoting economic relations between Amman and Damascus.

According to Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb, who Sunday returned to Amman from two-days of talks on economy and trade in Damascus, said the technical committee's recommendations will be submitted to a joint committee meeting planned

later by the ministers of industry and trade in the two countries.

While in Syria Mr. Abul Ragheb met with his counterpart Ahmad Nitham Al Deen and other ministers.

He said the decision on the technical committee meeting came as a result of those talks.

Mr. Abul Ragheb and Mr. Nitham Al Deen co-chaired a meeting of the general assembly of the Jordan-Syria Industry Company (JSIC), which owns a wall-to-wall carpeting plant in

the Syrian town of Sweida and the White Cement Factory in Jordan.

According to Mr. Abul Ragheb, reports submitted to the general assembly meeting showed that the wall-to-wall carpeting plant earned profits in 1993, 1994 and 1995, and that the cement factory began to yield profits in 1991.

He said the two plants were previously operating at a loss, but he did not elaborate.

Also during his visit, Mr. Abul Ragheb held talks

with Syrian Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade Mohammad Imadi.

In addition, he and Mr. Imadi co-chaired a general assembly meeting of the Jordanian-Syrian Free Zones Company and reviewed its investment portfolio.

Mr. Abul Ragheb said 16 firms have already invested in the free zone facility containing industrial and commercial enterprises.

The joint facility is located nearby the border between Jordan and Syria.

ICRC gives clean bill of health to Kingdom's juvenile delinquent reformatory centres

AMMAN (Petra) — Following visits to some of the country's juvenile delinquent reformatory centres, Yves Giovannoni, head of the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Jordan, Sunday said he was impressed by the level of operations and the conditions at these facilities.

"I have visited several of these centres and was impressed with what I saw in terms of qualified cadres

running the centres, the training courses the youth are attending and the extent of cooperation between the centres and various Jordanian educational and scientific institutions," said Mr. Giovannoni.

The ICRC representative said he was particularly impressed with the centres' programmes for the rehabilitation of the youth at these facilities, saying that they can benefit from their

skills in trades when they are released and can earn an income for themselves as well as financially assist their families.

Later Sunday, Mr. Giovannoni met Public Security Department (PSD) Director Lieutenant General Abdul Rahman Adwan, who briefed him on the training programmes for the juveniles.

Lt. Gen. Adwan told Mr. Giovannoni that at the recent meeting of the Coun-

cil of Arab Ministers of Interior, the council endorsed the Jordanian juvenile reformatory system as a model for other Arab League countries.

The PSD chief said his department was constructing new centres which would better serve the various rehabilitation programmes and provide more and modern facilities for these troubled youth.

JD 327,415 spent on camps in 1995

AMMAN (Petra) — About JD 327,415 were spent in 1995 on improving living conditions of Palestinian refugees and bettering infrastructure in refugee camps around the Kingdom, according to a report issued by the Palestinian Affairs Department of the Foreign Ministry.

The report said of the total amount, JD 259,000

were extended by the department and JD 14,000 by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

The sum was distributed to clubs, centres for the handicapped and camp improvement committees.

Al Talibiya Refugee Camp, south of Amman, received JD 17,969, which were used to finance a sewerage network project, the Prince Hassan Refugee Camp Improvement Committee received JD 15,513 to build premises for the committee, Madaba camp received JD 6,464 for infrastructure projects and Hitteen Refugee Camp received JD 41,000 for similar projects.

The Zarqa Refugee Camp received JD 17,684,

Sukhneh camp received JD 3,710, Irbid camp JD 13,005, Azmi Mufti camp JD 41,074 and Baqaa JD 144,500 and Jerash camp JD 26,496.

The Palestinian Affairs Department allocated JD 44,000 in 1995 for sports clubs in the 13 refugee camps around the Kingdom.

Aqaba village women transform their lives

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Sheep roaming inside houses, naked children playing in the streets, dirty water in front of houses, and an "indifferent" community which does not understand the notion of social work. That is how Ferial Saleh remembers the Shalaleh area of Aqaba only seven months ago.

But Shalaleh is different today.

Thanks to the commitment of 28 women from the area, the streets of the city are clean now, the children are playing in a public garden and the sheep are grazing in a special area outside the district.

The women were brought together by the Centre of Social Development (CSD) in Nazal district in Amman, which according to its director, Ms. Saleh, became interested in Shalaleh after hearing about the situation there.

"After discussing the case with the members of the CSD, we decided to carry out a socio-economic study which would give us

the inside picture of the situation," in Shalaleh, Ms. Saleh said.

The study, which was carried out on 370 families, showed that 75 per cent of women in Shalaleh were illiterate, and that there was a high drop out rate among students. The women also complained of violence against children and the lack of basic hygienic needs.

Some also complained that their neighbours were raising sheep inside their houses, said Ms. Saleh.

The study identified the problems of the area and worked out a plan to deal with them. Ms. Saleh formed a women's committee in Shalaleh, whose 5,000 residents come from different areas in the south of Jordan, and entrusted the women with the task of improving their own lives.

The committee learned ways to deal with officials as well as the local community. Members would meet with Ms. Saleh once a week to assess their work after drawing up a three-month working plan.

"The CSD has been working with the 28

women for the last four months on ways to solve the problems listed in the study," said Ms. Saleh, who has 17 years of experience in social work.

The committee's first priority was to convince residents to take the sheep away from the residential area to the outskirts of the Shalaleh, after the municipality offered a new grazing area.

The second major task was to build a playground for the children. Ms. Saleh said that the mothers' continued fear was that their children could get involved in substance abuse such as glue and turpentine sniffing, especially that the area was known as a "den for smugglers" and such kinds of abuse were prevalent.

"Children had only the street to play in, and mothers were always afraid that their children will be subjected to abuse and junkies," said Ms. Saleh.

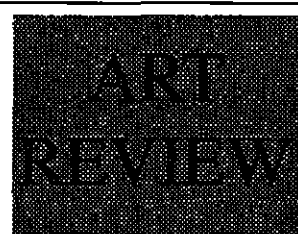
So the playground was a necessity and the committee started building a public garden for the children.

The committees also launched a health awareness campaign to educate women on hygiene. Mem-

bers have been meeting with the local women every Saturday to discuss issues related to health. The municipality also applied pressure to encourage positive behaviour. For example, if the women did not stop throwing dirty water on the street, the municipality will fine them.

Future plans include an anti-violence campaign to educate the local community on ways to discipline the children without physical abuse. The first step in that direction was to organise a 31-child committee to carry out a research about their problems and ways to solve them.

Seven months after the launching of the programme, Shalaleh women still have a long way to go, said Ms. Saleh. But what has already been achieved is significant, she said, especially that during this short period, 100 illiterate women have registered in a literacy programme.



By Ica Wahbeh
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

Amman — The proceeds of an exhibition featuring a group of German artists' water-colours, currently on display at the Goethe-Institut, will be donated for charity, according to Dr. Dieter Glade, director of the institute.

The work of the eight artists is accompanied by a display of photos depicting, like the paintings, landscapes and still life.

The pastel colours and sketchy outlines, barely hinting at the nature of things but enough to fully represent the target, render landscapes from a variety of places like Germany, Italy, France and the Galapagos.

Rolling lines with soft curves, sometimes rebelling to form a sharp peak, make hills and valleys and ocean water but also rugged mountain tops and foamy wave crests, ploughed earth and islands.

The Italian landscape is either that of luxuriant vegetation, sensibly disciplined to form a park path lined with flowery shrubs and beautifully clipped trees, or buildings - typical villas drowned in foliage, with windows peeking from behind branches and low stone walls reminding of ancient architecture (like in Tuscany) or slim, tall, crowded buildings, brightly coloured in crimson red or greyish blue, mossy and reminding of the water they are built on (in Venice).

The seasons are all present in the works; summer and spring are predominant, and winter, contrary to what would be expected, is not its desolate, wintry self but represented by warm colours (brown, grey, taupe) and country scenery that invites to long walks or seems to be awaiting children with sleds to fill up the air with their joyful cries.

Still life portrays plump, ripe pumpkins or fruits next to a decanter. The contours are highlighted by ink lines drawn with a quill that also seem to give depth and character to the otherwise insipid fruits.

Olive green is perhaps the predominant colour, but splashes of blue, yellow, purple, brown and brick red serve their purpose, that of bringing life to the painting, brighten it and underline the theme.

Intense yellowish orange tinged with burgundy red or anil blue, for example, is perfect for a hot summer Venice day, while aqua and greenish blue portray water or a misty sky.

A more realistic, if naive, representation is that of a farm house in northern Germany. Clear-cut contours, bright colours and attention to detail make it look like a fairy tale illustration. It is refreshing and elating.

The few photos on display are highly colourful and have captured picturesque landscapes and bright flowers.

The works will be on display for one more week.

FILMS

* "Der Zerbrochne Krug" at Goethe-Institut, Jabbal Amman at 8:00 p.m.

* "Le File Prefere" at the French Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

PLAYS

* "Unclothing and Horse's Move" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

* "Ramadan Supermarket" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

AN INTERNATIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY, BASED IN JORDAN IS SEEKING A FRENCH-UNIVERSITY GRADUATE (MALE/FEMALE) IN PHARMACY OR SCIENCE.

QUALIFIED CANDIDATES MAY SEND THEIR C.V. TO FAX NO. 817102, OR CALL TEL : 865882,3,4 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER.

Red Cross: More aid needed for North Korea famine

BEIJING (R) — International Committee of the Red Cross officials said Sunday that more international aid was needed to feed 130,000 North Koreans on the brink of starvation and living in makeshift shelter through the bitter winter cold.

"The problem is getting deeper," Simon Messiri, deputy director of the ICRC's Asia and Pacific Department said in a telephone interview en route to the North Korean capital, Pyongyang.

The federation had been providing emergency aid to about 120,000 people left destitute and on the brink of famine after torrential rains killed as many as 300 people and left well over 600,000 homeless in the isolated state last August.

"This group can't survive without emergency food aid," Mr. Messiri said.

A structural shortage of food in North Korea meant that the 130,000 people assigned to the care of the federation would require food aid until the next harvest in late September, Mr. Messiri said.

"It is pretty desperate," he said.

The federation was providing food aid of 450 grammes (15 ounces) of rice per person per day, he said.

The federation was now

considering whether to launch a second appeal for aid from international donors after a tepid response to an earlier appeal, he said.

After the storms last August, the group appealed for five million Swiss francs (\$4.3 million) but had received responses worth only about 70 per cent of that.

Conditions in North Korea, whose Communist rulers have long isolated the country from the rest of the world, were so bleak that the group might have to double the appeal, officials have said.

The group had bought about 3,500 tonnes of rice — enough to last the 120,000 hungry and homeless in its care for about four months, Mr. Messiri said. More would be needed before the next harvest.

Donations that had originally been intended to help to rehouse the homeless had been used for emergency food purchases, Mr. Messiri said, leaving many still housed in school and public buildings nearly six months after the floods.

"Starvation is a possibility," Mr. Messiri said. "They are very close to that now."

Temperatures in North Korea were now -10 degrees Celsius with many living under plastic sheeting and the rice ration halved,

the federation said in its spotlight publication to be released this week.

Some 500,000 people were being helped by the World Food Programme, he said.

Japan has been the biggest donor and the federation is seeking aid from Western Europe.

North Korea has gone on an angry offensive about its need for food aid from the United States and other countries, including a rare summoning up of its powerful military's view on the issue.

In another possible sign of irritation at questioning of its plight, North Korea has announced it is disbanding a team that recovers the remains of U.S. soldiers killed during the 1950-1953 Korean War.

With the United States, South Korea and Japan due to start talks Wednesday about whether to give Pyongyang food aid because of floods, North Korea said Saturday it will "no longer pin any hope on humanitarian assistance."

The talks among the three, also chief underwriters of a 1994 accord under which Pyongyang agreed to halt its nuclear programme, will be held in Honolulu on Jan. 24 and 25.

Some U.S. and South Korean officials question if

famine claims are exaggerated. They fear food aid could be diverted to North Korea's 1.2 million-strong army, the world's fifth largest.

Meanwhile news reports said Sunday South Korea is ready to take a "flexible stance" on providing food to North Korea if the latter allows the South's Red Cross to join an international mission in Pyongyang.

South Korea's domestic Yonhap News Agency quoted an unidentified Unification Ministry official as saying the government would allow domestic businesses to offer humanitarian food aid provided it was delivered by the South's Red Cross, an apparent reversal of Seoul's earlier stance.

The official was quoted as saying that if Southern Red Cross officials were allowed to join the International Red Cross mission in the North, it would "ensure a more accurate assessment of North Korea's food situation and prevent the food aid from being delivered to the military."

He said the South Korean Red Cross would ask the International Red Cross at a meeting in Geneva this week to arrange for the Seoul group to join its mission in Pyongyang.

Hopes fade for finding survivors from overloaded Indonesian ferry

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (AFP) — Hope faded Sunday of finding more survivors from the shark-infested waters where the KPM Gurita sank two days earlier, with still around 150 passengers missing.

Authorities extended the search area as two British survivors backed up military claims that the ship was overloaded and swayed before sinking.

Two foreign victims, one German and one Irish, were among the latest bodies found after the disaster Friday night. Officials said there were 54 people confirmed dead but around 150 still missing, and only 47 rescued so far.

The Gurita sank a few nautical miles from its destination, Sabang, on the tip of Indonesia's most north-westerly island in Aceh province.

While the authorities pressed ahead with their massive rescue operation, survivors and the bodies of the dead were taken to Banda Aceh where hundreds of people waited at the port for news of family and friends.

"The boat appeared to be overloaded and was delayed for two hours while bags of cement were loaded on board," Stephen Nicholson from Chislehurst in Kent told the BBC from Sabang.

"After one hour and fifty minutes the boat started to sway from one side and the captain was urging people to run from one side to the other," Mr. Nicholson said.

The two Britons, who have been travelling around the world for two years, spent 20 hours in the shark-infested waters clinging

onto an inflatable life raft.

Mr. Nicholson said at one stage he was pulled under the water by a dying man.

"It was blind panic. I just had to get him off me," he said.

One of the dead foreigners was named as Manuela Hellmich, from Stuttgart in Germany, by the German consulate in Medan. The other was an Irish woman, only identified as Margaret, according to Sabang local government official Sapruddin.

An official with the U.S. consulate in Medan said the surviving American woman was in "good shape."

The identities of the four foreigners still missing was not immediately known. But an immigration official in Sabang, said five of the 11 foreigners known to have been on the government-owned ship have been found alive.

The survivors were named as: Pieter Bremer, 36, from Germany, Wang Sung of Taiwan, Britons Stephen Nicholson, 34, from Chislehurst in Kent and Caroline Harrison, 24, from Shooters Hill, South London, and a 25-year-old American woman, again only identified as Margaret.

Mr. Wang was kept in hospital. The other four were put on a ship that took them to Banda Aceh.

Lieutenant Umri, of the navy in Sabang, said most rescued Indonesian passengers had returned home.

"We have expanded the search area today to a 50-75 mile (80-120 kilometre) radius, with three search and rescue helicopters and one air force aircraft. We are also looking in the open

sea for any possibilities of people drifting," he said.

A strong current has hampered the search. Bodies have been found as far as 25 miles from the scene of the disaster, Lt. Umri said.

Two warships, the Selako and the Suar, and two planes had already been deployed to join dozens of fishing vessels scouring the sea for survivors.

Lt. Umri said the accident was caused "by big waves and bad weather." Previous reports said the KPM Gurita hit rocks just before entering Sabang.

He also said there was a possibility there had been a leak but added that more investigation was needed. The ship sank in about 285 metres (900 feet) of water.

Military sources have said the boat was overloaded with more than 250 people, while the passenger list only declared 217 people.

The Gurita, which was to have been replaced this year, was also carrying 80 tonnes of cement and 14 tonnes of food. The Gurita was the main link to the mainland for the people on the tiny island of Weh.

Overloading is common on Indonesian ferries. Much of the population of around 190 million people relies on sea transport to get between the hundreds of islands in the archipelago.

Most recently, 16 people died when a ferry sank in the Banda Sea in December 1994. In June 1992, 17 bodies were found but another 70 went missing when a ship carrying illegal immigrant workers sank off Lombok Island, West Nusa Tenggara.

Italy's neo-fascist leader upsets efforts to form new government

ROME (AFP) — Efforts to form a new government in Italy ran into trouble at the weekend after neo-fascist leader Gianfranco Fini, who wants early elections, refused to accept Lamberto Dini as the next prime minister.

The unexpected rejection came Saturday during a meeting with President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro at the end of a week of consultations with 26 political parties to secure wider backing for the outgoing prime minister.

Mr. Scalfaro, declaring "Italian politics is sick", announced a "pause for reflection" of several days before consultations resume in earnest.

The president accepted Mr. Dini's resignation 10 days ago, but is keen to avoid parliamentary elections during Italy's six-month European Union presidency which is due to end in July.

"Our political situation is in a pathologi-

cal state because splintering is a sign of a serious pathology," Mr. Scalfaro said Saturday.

A fresh round of political consultations is expected to take place mid-week, after Mr. Scalfaro fulfills a series of scheduled provincial visits between Monday and Wednesday.

"The choice will be between reforms and elections," Mr. Scalfaro said Saturday night, at the close of the consultations.

Mr. Dini, the former treasury minister in Silvio Berlusconi's cabinet, which collapsed in late 1994, had led a government of technocrats for a year to try to pass key legislation.

But he did not enjoy a solid parliamentary base, and so far Mr. Scalfaro's efforts have proved fruitless.

Jiang moves to ensure post-Deng China is stable

BEIJING (R) — China's President Jiang Zemin, heir-apparent to ageing paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, has taken several steps to ensure the death of his patron does not destabilise the world's most populous nation and fastest growing economy.

The People's Daily, mouthpiece of the ruling Communist Party, splashed a tough speech on political conformity by the state president and party chief across its front page last week.

The president paid a personal visit to the offices of the People's Liberation Army Daily where he exhorted the newspaper's journalists to pay heed to politics, prompting a string of headline editorials analysing his instructions.

Mr. Jiang's repeated reminders to the media and the nation on the importance of politics could mark the birth of a new ideological slogan after several years of leading China's 1.2 billion people under the banner of economic growth, Chinese and Western political analysts said.

"Jiang has given the order to talk politics to get the leftists to support him," said one veteran Chinese analyst, comparing the slogan of "talking politics" to the "class struggle" that the late Chairman Mao Tse-tung used to rally popular opinion.

"You can see from this some of the preparations to tighten control before Deng's death," the analyst said. "He has to make sure that nothing will go wrong after Deng's death."

Other analysts and diplomats agreed that Mr. Jiang was acting to try to shore up his position for the day when Mr. Deng, now 91, passes from the scene.

Last week, Mr. Jiang allowed the Xinhua News Agency to take control of distribution of economic information supplied to China by foreign vendors and the analysts described the closing of that loophole as another brick in Mr. Jiang's wall.

"He is tightening the screws," a second Chinese analyst said.



Point Park in downtown Pittsburgh lies underwater from flooding of the Allegheny River, top, and Monongahela River, bottom. Precipitation and melting snow runoff caused the flooding. The rivers form the Ohio River at the point (Reuters photo)

Clinton congratulates shuttle astronauts

HOUSTON, Texas (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton Saturday personally greeted the astronauts who returned from a nine-day mission in space, telling them their endeavours were crucial to U.S. relations with Japan and Russia.

"Our space programme is an important part of our partnership for world peace," Mr. Clinton told the astronauts at Ellington Field in Houston, before the crew — including a Japanese astronaut — went to the Johnson Space Centre for a debriefing.

"It is an important part of how we relate to and work with the Japanese, the Russians and others in building a more cooperative, safer world for the 21st century," said Mr. Clinton, in Houston to attend the funeral of a former U.S. legislator.

The space shuttle Endeavour landed at the Kennedy Space Centre early Saturday, and the astronauts landed in Houston around 1:00 p.m. (1800 GMT).

During the mission, which began Jan. 11, the six-man crew, including Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata, retrieved a Japanese satellite and deployed a scientific satellite.

But the mission's most spectacular jobs were two spacewalks, each more than six hours long, in which astronauts tested equipment and techniques that could be used in building the international space station.

The first task on this mission was the recovery Saturday of a three-tonne Japanese scientific satellite, launched last March by a Japanese rocket.

Mr. Wakata operated the shuttle's robot, retrieving the Japanese spacecraft. Two malfunctioning solar panels on the satellite had to be jettisoned into space.

Mr. Wakata, 32, is the third Japanese astronaut to travel aboard a U.S. space shuttle, but the first to serve as mission specialist. In a news conference Friday, Mr. Wakata expressed satisfaction with his work.

"Of course I would like to do an EVA sometime," Mr. Wakata said, referring to extra vehicular activities — NASA lingo for spacewalks — "but I am satisfied with my work."

The next walking Mr. Wakata does will be on Earth, however. NASA spokesman Jeffrey Carr told AFP the astronaut would be going on a speaking tour in several U.S. and Japanese cities in coming weeks.

The Endeavour astronauts met the U.S. president by chance Saturday. He was in Houston to pay his last respects to former U.S. Representative Barbara Jordan.

"I am so glad that I was in Houston ... at the right time," Mr. Clinton said. "We were thrilled by their success and we're glad to have them home."

Fighting still heavy in Angola — report

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Heavy fighting involving Angola's one-time rebel UNITA movement and South African mercenaries has taken place in Angola over the past 10 weeks despite a peace accord, the Johannesburg Sunday Independent said.

The report, by a journalist who accompanied the mercenaries, said hostilities occurred in a wide area in northern Angola along the Zaire border and, in some instances, across it.

It said at least five Zairean towns had been hit in armoured and air assaults.

American and Israeli diplomatic sources quoted by the newspaper said casualties on both sides had been heavy.

The Angolan government, however, denied that its forces had taken part in any recent actions against the

Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), headed by Jonas Savimbi.

Angolan President Eduardo Dos Santos and Mr. Savimbi are due to meet in Libreville, Gabon, Monday for talks to kick-start the peace process, which has become dangerously deadlocked.

A November accord signed in Lusaka, Zambia, brought to an end the devastating civil war that had wracked the southwest African country since independence from Portugal in 1975.

But signs of goodwill over negotiations contrast with the situation on the ground, where operations to quarter troops are not progressing and the ceasefire is violated continually.

The presence of South African mercenaries, who

have been employed mainly as pilots and training officers by the government, has exacerbated the situation and Mr. Savimbi last year demanded they be expelled.

Mr. Dos Santos finally succumbed to pressure from United States President Bill Clinton and in December ordered all South Africans out.

Personnel from the South African company recruiting the mercenaries, Executive Outcomes, told the Sunday Independent, however, that Mr. Dos Santos' order was little more than "diplomatic sleight of hand" and that many mercenaries are still in Angola.

The newspaper published what it said were recent pictures showing white South Africans in the heart of Angola.

Yeltsin creates authority for Cossack

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin has created a special authority for troops drawn from Russia's traditional Cossack Movement, revived in the post-Soviet era.

Mr. Yeltsin issued a decree Saturday setting up the authority, made up of 35 people, "to improve the inter-action and coordination of executive authority and Cossack communities".

Russia's leadership views the Cossacks, tens of thousands strong and based mainly in southern Russia's Don Valley, as a force to counteract the influence of separatists in Chechnya.

Cossacks, some distinctive in their traditional embroidered shirts, tassels and curly moustaches, helped police in trying to control the movements of Chechen fighters during last year's hostage-taking in the southern Russian town of Budennovsk.

Both Russian and Ukrainian authorities have proposed integrating Cossacks into Border Guard units.

They have become involved in other political disputes, supporting Slav separatists in Moldova's breakaway Dnestr region and pro-Russian activists in

Ukraine's Crimea peninsula.

The Cossack Movement functioned under the tsars to defend Russian interests and also existed in neighbouring Ukraine during the 16th to 18th century under independent command.

Cossacks frequently attacked groups they viewed as threats, including Poles and Jews.

The revived movement, closely linked to the Orthodox Church, seeks to instil moral values in a society jarred by the destruction of seven decades of Socialist ideals.

Aristide weds Haitian-American attorney

PORT-AU-PRINCE (AFP) — Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, 42, married Haitian-American attorney Mildred Trouillot, 30, at a quiet religious ceremony late Saturday.

The wedding, at Mr. Aristide's private residence east of the Haitian capital, was attended by U.S. national security adviser Anthony Lake.

In taking their marriage vows, the bride and groom said there would be no "divorce" between them and the people of this impoverished Caribbean

island nation.

Ms. Trouillot — whom the popular president affectionately calls "Minouche" — met Mr. Aristide during his exile in Washington, following a violent coup that forced him out of office in September 1991.

Mr. Aristide was returned to power in October 1994, a month after a U.S.-led military landing to oust the leaders of a military coup.

Ordained a priest in July 1982, Mr. Aristide was excluded from the Salesian Order in December 1988 for inciting "hate and violence

and exalting class struggle." He rejected the decision as unfair and sent a letter defending his actions to ecclesiastical authorities in Rome. He never had a reply.

In November 1994, a priest close to Mr. Aristide said he had decided to leave the priesthood under pressure from the Vatican in exchange for political breathing space.

Mr. Aristide's was only the second marriage of an incumbent Haitian president this century after that of Jean-Claude Duvalier in May 1980.

Diana meeting 'mystery man' — report

LONDON (AFP) — Princess Diana, the estranged wife of the Prince of Wales, has been holding "midnight trysts" with an unknown man at Kensington Palace, the News Of The World reported Sunday. The paper said the princess usually met the man, who always wore black, at a meeting point arranged in advance. According to the paper, the "man in black" would emerge from the shadows to hide in the back of Princess Diana's car after which she would take him into the palace. After some time, she would come out in her car apparently alone, the paper said. The princess refused to comment on the report.

Deal saves debt-ridden duchess

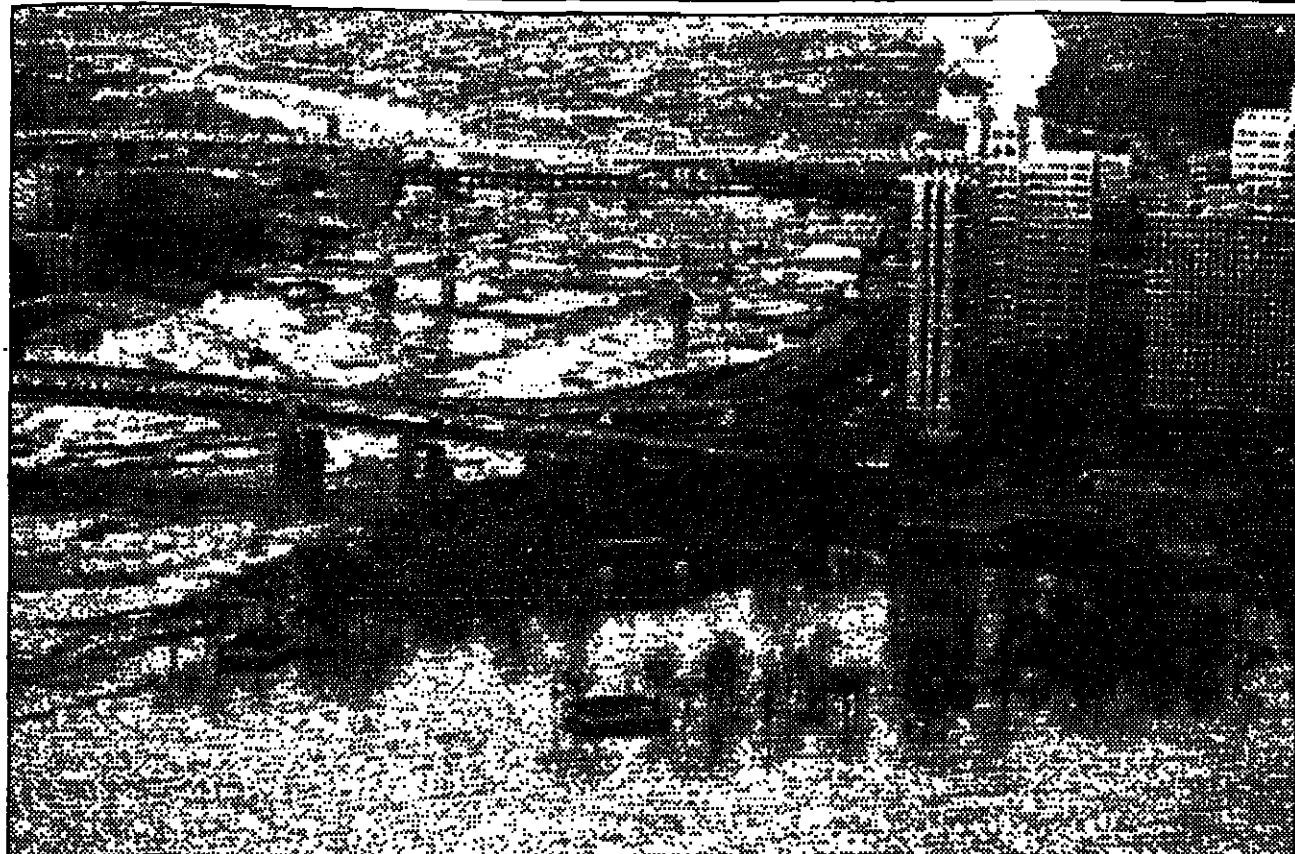
LONDON (AFP) — The Duchess of York has concluded a business deal with a U.S. media group which will enable her to repay debts estimated at more than a million dollars, her spokesman announced here. In a statement her spokesman said money for the deal would come from an American group specialising in programmes for children. The spokesman said the deal had been approved by Coutts Co. the bankers of the duchess. Details of the financial package will be made public in the course of the week, the spokesman said. The arrangement is reported to involve American businessman Ray Chambers, 53 whose fortune is estimated at \$775 million. The Sunday Times said it was believed Mr. Chambers had paid several million dollars for all or part of the royalties from Bugle The Helicopter, a character created by the duchess in a book she wrote for children. Bugle has already earned her \$375,000. The former Sarah Ferguson, 36 — popularly known as Fergie — separated from Prince Andrew, the queen's second son in 1992. Since then, she has run up debts estimated last week in the press at \$1.5 million with some papers even citing twice that sum.

Find debunks notion that Romans never came to Ireland

DUBLIN (AFP) — Roman ruins discovered north of Dublin have put paid to a long and cherished belief in Ireland that the country escaped invasion by the armies of ancient Rome. Archaeologists found the ruins of a "castrum" or fortified military camp at Drumanagh about 20 kilometres north of Dublin, the Sunday Times reported. Classical literature never made any reference to the presence of Roman soldiers in Ireland — a fact which comforted the Irish in the notion that their Celtic forebears were never vanquished by Rome. Even when Roman objects were found on the island, archaeologists agreed that they must have been imported. In the view of archaeologists, the camp at Drumanagh was built as a bridgehead for military campaigns.

Cold puts skids under turkey bowling gala

ST PAUL, Mn (R) — The icebox festival in the northern Minnesota town of International Falls was postponed Saturday — because of the cold. As temperatures dipped to minus 42 degrees (minus 41C), organisers of the annual winter festival — its highlight is a frozen turkey bowling contest — said they would wait for a milder day. The festival includes skating, skiing and snowmobile races as well as the unusual poultry bowling contest.



Point Park in downtown Pittsburgh lies underwater from flooding of the Allegheny River, top, and Monongahela River, bottom. Precipitation and melting snow runoff caused the flooding. The rivers form the Ohio River at the point (Reuter photo)

Dikes hold after residents told to flee U.S. flood

WILKES-BARRE, PA. (R) — A sophisticated system of dikes held back the rising waters of the Susquehanna River in northeast Pennsylvania Saturday after 100,000 residents were told to evacuate.

Many people in Wilkes-Barre, a former coal mining center with a population of 90,000 people, left for higher ground after a county-wide order was issued shortly after dawn.

Officials said the levee system would hold water up to a level of about 39 feet (11 metres). By mid-afternoon county emergency officials said the water reached 35.38 feet (10.7 metres) and was rising.

The Pennsylvania floods were the latest result of a series of storms that have battered the United States from New Orleans to Portland, Maine, in the past two weeks.

Blizzards and sub-freezing temperatures, ice storms, wind, rain and floods have closed schools, disrupted highways and airports and caused extensive damage.

The dikes protecting Wilkes-Barre collapsed during a flood in 1972, killing 24 people in the town and 100 people across the area. That flood crested at 40.9 feet (12.47 metres) and wiped out nearly all the waterfront buildings.

"Pennsylvania has learned from its tragic past," said John Comey, spokesman for Pennsylvania Emergency Management. "We now have one of the most sophisticated flood detection and reaction systems in the country."

Across the state in Pittsburgh, an emergency order was issued after flooding swept parts of the city, washing out businesses, putting streets underwater and forcing residents in some parts of the city to flee.

One person died in Bedford County, in south central Pennsylvania, when the truck she was driving was swept away.

Flooding was reported from Virginia to Maine in the aftermath of a storm system that brought warm temperatures and rain Friday to an area covered by two feet (60 cm) of snow.

Flash flood warnings were issued for the Ohio River in West Virginia and several roads were closed across the state.

Hundreds of people were evacuated in Binghamton, New York, where the Susquehanna flooded streets near downtown. Flooding was also reported in downtown Philadelphia.

In Virginia, the James River was expected to crest near flood level at Richmond Sunday. Bath County, Virginia, got 5 inches (13 cm) of rain Friday.

The dikes protecting Wilkes-Barre were built higher and reinforced with metal following the 1972 flood, which came in the aftermath of hurricane Agnes, a \$3 billion storm that at the time was the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history.

Mr. Comey said the Susquehanna flood could also affect a dozen large communities down river toward the state capital, Harrisburg. He said the river was expected to be out of banks by as much as 5 feet (1.5 metres).

In Pittsburgh, where the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers join to form the Ohio, police rescued people by boat from a housing complex where water was three feet (1 metre) deep. The Ohio crested Saturday and began to recede.

Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy took a helicopter tour of the area and said he saw capsized boats and enormous trees in some parts of the rivers, adding that "the low areas of the city really have taken a battering."

Opposition gives Khaleda until Tuesday to stop polls

DHAKA (AFP) — Bangladesh's opposition Sunday gave Prime Minister Khaleda Zia two days to call off Feb. 15's planned elections, saying she would be responsible for any violence should the vote go ahead.

Opposition leaders also called nine days of nationwide demonstrations starting Monday to force Mrs. Khaleda's resignation and the cancellation of the parliamentary elections — dubbed "farce" by the opposition.

"The prime minister has to call off elections by Jan. 23 and announce new polls schedule or else she will be held responsible for any confrontation," warned main opposition Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina Wajed at a party rally in downtown Dhaka.

Mrs. Hasina also appealed to the security forces, including the military, not to

cooperate with the government on the "one-party" vote.

Tuesday is the final date for the withdrawal of nomination papers for the polls.

The opposition accused Mrs. Khaleda and her ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of violating the sanctity of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting.

"How can elections be held during Ramadan when people will be praying to Allah and fasting?" asked Mrs. Hasina, appealing to the Election Commission to intervene.

Opposition groups also warned they might call a general strike on the election day if the vote is not called off.

Meanwhile, the fundamentalist Jamaat-E-Islami accused India of responsibility for the crisis saying it was fomenting the con-

frontation to ensure Bangladesh remained its permanent market for consumer goods.

The opposition is still campaigning for Mrs. Khaleda's resignation and elections under a neutral caretaker government, but said it now plans a new thrust to oust Mrs. Khaleda and disrupt the planned polls.

After talks failed to end a 21-month government-opposition standoff, the BNP announced that it would go to the polls along with several other minor groups.

This would be the first time since Bangladesh's birth in 1971 that elections are held during Ramadan.

Under Bangladesh's constitution elections have to be held within 90 days of the date parliament was dissolved — Nov. 24.

Meanwhile, Salman Rahman, a top business

leader and convenor of business pressure group Samridhho Bangladesh Andolon (Campaign for Prosperous Bangladesh) blasted the politicians, saying the situation under which the polls were going to be held would cause political instability.

The ruling BNP faces dissent among its own rank and file over nominations as well as the opposition's vow to boycott and disrupt the process.

The BNP has ordered dissenters to withdraw their nomination papers as independent candidates for contesting the upcoming polls or face "stern action," the Daily Star newspaper reported.

On the other hand, the government was planning its own strategy to strengthen security during the elections and ensure a good turnout.

Corpses testify from Rwanda mass grave

KIBUYE CHURCH, Rwanda (R) — Nothing among the misty hills and blue waters of Lake Kivu by this Catholic Church in deepest Africa prepares one for the horror just beneath the ground — rows and rows of decomposing flesh.

Crouching in the dust behind this Rwandan church amid the remains, a grisly memorial to 1994's genocide, forensic scientists of a U.N. tribunal exhume victims from a mass grave.

The painstaking scratching of the scientists is not enough to disrupt the tranquility of the spectacular scene.

But the unspeakable horror of the massacres in and around this church in the western town of Kibuye, scene of one of the worst killings, lies just beneath the surface where thousands of corpses are believed to have been buried.

One of the latest witnesses to this scene was visiting U.S. ambassador to the

United Nations, Madeleine Albright, who gazed in horror Sunday at rows of skeletons and white skulls staring out from tables inside the church.

"I am speechless," said Mrs. Albright, looking shaken. "I am here to make sure that the past is not forgotten in Rwanda. I thank the tribunal very much for doing all this not only for the people of Rwanda but also for humanity."

The U.N. tribunal, based in Tanzania and looking into the deaths of an estimated one million Rwandans, mainly Tutsis and moderate Hutus killed by Hutu soldiers and militiamen, indicted eight Rwandans on genocide charges in December for the killings in Kibuye region.

Tribunal officials and Western human rights experts say up to 200,000 people were massacred last year in this area alone.

Zulu king calls for ban on Buthelezi — report

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini has appealed to President Nelson Mandela to ban Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and other traditional leaders from involvement in politics, the Johannesburg Sunday Times said.

The report said the monarch made the call during talks with Mr. Mandela Friday at the Zulu royal palace in Nongoma, in the rural heartland of Kwazulu-Natal province.

King Goodwill, it said, asked Mr. Mandela to force leaders such as Chief Buthelezi, who heads the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and is home affairs minister in South Africa's government of national unity, to choose between politics and traditional leadership.

The move is likely to further bedevil already strained relations between King Goodwill and Mr. Buthelezi, his uncle.

In 1994, King Goodwill broke ties with Mr. Buthelezi after spending almost two decades under his influence.

Since then, the king has been accused of being in the camp of Mr. Mandela's African National Congress (ANC), and relations between him and the IFP have deteriorated dramatically.

The king has also lost the support of the bulk of the province's 280 tribal chiefs and has challenged the provincial government in court over legislation creating a House of Traditional Leaders, of which Mr. Buthelezi is chairman.

The Sunday Times said the king, during his meeting with Mr. Mandela Friday, took bold steps to reassert his authority, asking that chiefs be paid through his office rather than through the IFP-controlled provincial government.

Russians contemplate bloody week on Chechen southern flank

MOSCOW (R) — Russia unleashed a fearsome barrage on a southern village to try to bring to bay Chechen gunmen holding hostages, but appears to have failed in its aim of punishing and deterring armed Chechen separatists.

President Boris Yeltsin and his top security officials stoutly defended the storming of Pervomayskoye as a milestone in the battle against terrorism. Mr. Yeltsin, trying to portray himself as a crime-fighter ahead of a presidential election, vowed to fight separatists "quietly" by destroying their bases.

But figures for dead and wounded varied widely and all indications were that many of the rebels had slipped through the Russian military ring around the village in Dagestan, just over the border from the rebels' native Chechnya.

"Terrorism would inevitably escalate in the north Caucasus if the rebel action were not decisively stopped," federal security chief Mikhail Barsukov, who ordered the assault, told a news conference Saturday.

Journalists scoffed at his suggestion that troops had shown restraint in using multiple-launch Grad rockets and not fired them straight at the village. Correspondents who entered the village after the assault saw homes in ruins, many smoldering.

Spokesmen for the fighters, loyal to Chechen separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, mocked Kremlin authorities.

In Turkey, a Black Sea ferry with around 200 freed hostages seized last week by pro-Chechen gunmen, was to leave for its original

destination Sunday, the Russian port of Sochi.

Mr. Yeltsin's political standing is at a low ebb as he decides whether to run for a second term in June, at least in part because of 13 months of fighting in Chechnya. Official statistics show at least 25,000 people have died.

Virtually all his rivals, except extreme nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, denounced his decision to use a frontal attack to resolve the Pervomayskoye hostage-taking.

New clashes were reported inside Chechnya.

A Russian military statement from the regional capital Grozny said troops had beaten back an attack by Chechen gunmen, again near the Dagestan border. Troops traded fire with the rebels in the capital. One soldier had died.

Muslims in the Chechen

capital were marking the beginning of the month of Ramadan, ITAR-TASS news agency said, and the sale of alcohol had been banned.

TASS said 17 policemen from Siberia, among the 100 or so hostages held in Pervomayskoye, were still unaccounted for. That could mean they were presumably still with their escaped captors somewhere in Chechnya.

Rebel leader Maksud Ingulbayev, speaking Saturday at a headquarters in Chechnya, said he and other leaders of the "Lone Wolf" group which seized the hostages had escaped.

"We took about 20 Omon (Special Interior Ministry) servicemen and several civilian hostages with us, among them women and wounded," he said.

Mr. Ingulbayev gave a

scathing account of the Russian operation to overcome the rebels. "There was no coordination between aviation, artillery and other forces," he said.

The Chechen fighters launched their action on Jan. 9 by pushing into another Dagestan village, Kizlyar and herding about 2,000 hostages into a hospital.

Authorities said about 43 people were killed there. The gunmen took some of the hostages back towards Chechnya in buses but troops stopped and surrounded them in Pervomayskoye.

Mr. Barsukov said 82 of an estimated 120 hostages were freed and the fate of others was unknown. Mr. Yeltsin said Friday there had been 100 hostages. Official figures on the number of rebels killed varied between 150 and 180.



Russian Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov points at the map as he tells journalists about the operation in Pervomayskoye during a press-conference in Moscow. Gen. Kulikov said between 150 and 180 Chechen rebels were killed during the operation (Reuter photo)

Japan rightist gatecrashes parliament

TOKYO (R) — A rightist crashed a bus loaded with cans of gasoline into the entrance gate of Japan's parliament Sunday on the eve of Ryutaro Hashimoto's debut as prime minister.

Police said the van burst into flames, setting the scene for what is expected to be a fiery budget session that could shape Japanese politics for years to come.

No one was hurt in the afternoon incident with parliament empty ahead of Monday's opening of a 150-day budget session.

Police identified the 32-year-old rightist as Kazuyuki Tsuchida, a member of Nihon Kominto (Japan Imperial Peoples Party), a far right fringe group which reveres the emperor and supports Japan's actions in World War II.

Mr. Tsuchida told police that he "wanted to do something" to the Diet (parliament) before the session starts Monday.

For several days hundreds of rightists have been out on Tokyo streets loudly protesting Mr. Hashimoto's economic policies, particularly a plan to use billions of dollars in taxpayers money to bail out failed home mortgage firms.

But Mr. Hashimoto goes into his maiden speech as prime minister buoyed by opinion polls rating him one of the most popular new leaders of recent times.

But to retain popularity that could propel his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to its dream of regaining sole power in the next general elections, Mr. Hashimoto needs to negotiate the next 150 stormy days of parliament.

The conservative LDP at present rules in a 19-month-old coalition with the Socialist Party and the small Sakigake Party, an LDP splinter group.

Karachi partially paralysed by strike

KARACHI (AFP) — Large areas of Pakistan's commercial capital Karachi remained paralysed Sunday during a strike called by an ethnic party, while the opposition in the Senate protested over the situation after 12 killings in the city the previous day.

Sunday's strike, the second this month, was originally called by the opposition Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) to protest alleged extrajudicial killings of four of its workers by security forces last week.

Just one day before the strike another five MQM militants, including Rehman Ahmed — better known as Rehman Kana — and his brother Junsaid, were shot by police in the central district.

The police said the men died when they opened fire when they were stopped and questioned, but the MQM maintains that all the men were gunned down in cold blood after being arrested.

In Islamabad, opposition senators staged a token walkout from the house after an MQM member Ishaq Azhar alleged that police had killed 13 MQM activists in "fake encounters" in the past week.

Law and Justice Minister Raza Rabbani denied the allegation, telling the house that the "criminals" were killed when they tried to resist arrest and fired on police, who were "compelled" to return fire.

Karachi's volatile central district, where hundreds have died over the past two years, was completely deserted Sunday. Police and paramilitary troops took up positions at main intersections to prevent violence.

The western district, which houses Karachi's industrial area of Site, was also completely paralysed as were some sections of the eastern district, including the industrial area of Korangi where four unidentified bodies were found Saturday.

At least four vehicles were burned in the run-up to the strike but there were no reports of violence until late afternoon, officials said.

One man said to be a drug addict died when he was run over by a truck, hospital and police sources said.

All major markets, commercial centres,

schools and colleges remained closed. The country's premier bourse, the Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE), also did not open for trading Sunday, KSE officials said.

Private vehicles were seen in some areas of Karachi, but public transport was virtually nonexistent except in the city's elite southern district where the main multinational banks and companies have their offices.

The MQM, which represents Urdu-speaking migrants from India after partition of the subcontinent in 1947, says it has no option other than strikes to protest against the killing of its activists.

Several of the MQM's key militants, including Farooq Dada and Faheem Commando, were killed by security personnel last year. MQM militants usually use their real first names and adopt noms de guerre for their last names.

Violence is on the decline and the terrorist network has been virtually broken, a senior police official, who did not want to be identified, told AFP.

"The security operation has had a significant impact," he said. "The number of killings is down by more than half of what it was last June when more than 300 died in a single month," he added.

The government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto accuses the MQM of instigating much of Karachi's endemic political violence, which left nearly 1,800 dead last year. At least 83 people have been killed this month.

The MQM denies the charge and says the unrest stems from the government's "racist and anti-Mohajir" policies. MQM Senator Ishaq Azhar Saturday accused the government of conducting a "virtual genocide" of the Mohajir community.

Talks between the two sides aimed at restoring peace in this embattled city collapsed late September after more than two months of negotiations and show no signs of being revived.

The MQM called 26 strikes last year, most of which were to protest against alleged extrajudicial killings, harassment and arrests of its workers, the party said.

Top Tamil rebel: War now, politics later

BATTICALOA, Sri Lanka (R) — A political leader of Sri Lanka's militant Tamil Tiger rebels stood at the gates of a village school, banks of admiring children behind him, and explained that now was not the time to talk politics, only war.

The school, from the government's point of view, is in enemy territory. It is also in a land of magical lagoons, palm trees and pelicans which belies the separatist violence that has torn this country since 1983.

Sivaganam Karikalan, deputy political leader of

the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and political chief for the eastern Batticaloa region, spoke to Reuters Thursday after visiting the school.

Recruitment of the children to join the LTTE, whose cadres are famous for the cyanide capsules they wear around their necks to be taken if captured, was not on the agenda.

Surrounded by teenagers carrying AK-47s, he said the LTTE had no recruitment problem, the war would continue and there

would be attacks "from time to time" in Colombo.

He denied LTTE involvement in the 1991 assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and said the Tigers had nothing to do with a shadowy rebel group Ellalan Force which in the past has threatened foreign interests in the name of Tamil Eelam, or homeland.

The LTTE has been widely accused of involvement in both.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
 مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية

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Editor-in-Chief:
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Editorial and advertising offices:
 Jordan Press Foundation,
 University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephone: 684311, 699634

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
 Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
 Jordan Times advertising department.

Strength in turnout

AS IMPORTANT as the results of the Palestinian elections Saturday in favour of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and his supporters are the massive turnout of voters is all the more impressive. There were fears that participation in the first ever Palestinian national elections would be much less than what it turned out to be in view of the opposition to the Palestinian-Israeli peace accords by radicals and the self-proclaimed boycott of these elections by Hamas. With an average turnout of about 70 per cent, Chairman Arafat and his supporters can be proud of not only his election as the first Palestinian president by a margin of 85 per cent but also by the defeat of all the factions who had proclaimed their opposition to holding the elections on the basis of the Oslo pact and campaigned feverishly against holding them.

Eighty five per cent of eligible voters in Gaza, the hotbed of Palestinian radicals, took part in the elections. This is a major achievement for the moderate and realistic forces among the Palestinian ranks and a strong vote of confidence in the platform of the National Authority on its peace deal with Israel. On the other hand only 30 per cent of Palestinian voters were able to cast their votes in East Jerusalem due to "Israeli obstacles and intimidation measures." This poor showing in Jerusalem is not a mere thumb down to Israel but also a big setback to the Palestinian quest for lasting peace. The result in Jerusalem is likewise a vindication of the long-standing policy of the Palestinians that no fair and democratic elections can be held under Israeli occupation.

Still the biggest loser in the Palestinian elections was perhaps Hamas which did not submit names of its candidates as a show of its opposition to the elections and the rejection of their outcome in advance. This could be one of the militant Islamist faction's biggest blunders although it tried to do through the back door what it failed to do openly when it gave the green light to seven Hamas members to run as "Islamic independents" for the self-rule council. Equally damaging to hardliners was the low turnout by Islamists in the elections as this policy ended up forfeiting the opportunity to express themselves and their views in a peaceful and democratic way.

In sum, though, and in spite of all the limitations, shortcomings and the failing of the Saturday voting process, the Palestinian elections have been generally free and fair. This much was acknowledged by several international observers. The next stage in the state building process now awaits the Palestinians and how they run their affairs in the future will determine the viability and true success of Saturday's poll.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

COMMENTING ON the Palestinian elections, a writer in Al Dustour said that election day was a remarkable event in the history of the Palestinian people and their struggle to achieve freedom and independence. Of course, some of those who failed in the elections will accuse the Palestine National Authority (PNA) of rigging the results or malpractices, which resulted in the election of influential Fatah movement candidates, said Saleh Qallab. One cannot expect the first ever Palestinian elections to be as good and successful as those conducted in say France, Sweden or Austria, but the elections which have taken place under the watchful eyes of international observers, were very important for the Palestinian people and the future of democracy in Palestine, added the writer. He said the Palestinians learn from their mistakes and surely the next elections will be better organised, but the first step had to be taken on the long trail and a difficult road leading to independence, adding that the Palestinians should realise that only through democracy can they achieve their aspirations. He said that the Jordanian people, who support their brothers on the other side of the river, can only wish the elected council success in its work to realise the Palestinian people's aspirations.

Mahmoud Rimawi, a writer in Al Dustour reflected on the situation in Bahrain in the light of recent reports about serious disturbances and expressed apprehension that the rioting could destabilise the country unless prompt government measures to contain them are taken. It is regrettable to see violence spreading in the island nation and it is sad to see groups, which seek reforms, resorting to violent actions. Stressing that dialogue and democratic methods can ensure reforms and improvement of the situation, the writer said the Bahrain people should take lessons from the situations prevailing in Egypt and Algeria and the past picture in Lebanon. Though the demands of the rioting groups could be understood and could be legitimate, the means to achieve them through violence are totally deplorable, said the writer.

Human Rights File

By Waleed M. Sa'di

Begging could be lawful

THE HIGHEST court in Italy ruled recently that begging is lawful and protected constitutionally by striking down a law that aimed to stop people from begging out in the open. This is an interesting move by Italy as the court decision opens a new vista on a phenomenon that could be one of the oldest "professions" worldwide, including countries that are as advanced as the U.S. The issue is also pertinent for us here in Jordan, especially in the month of Ramadan, when more people walk the streets in search for additional income.

The rationale behind the Italian move could be better understood and appreciated against the background of harsh economic realities that have afflicted so many countries, including our own, when more and more people are joining the long queues of the unemployed and the state cannot afford to provide them with even subsistence income to make ends meet. In such a context, poor people are left with no choice except to resort to crime or begging. For sure, begging is a lesser evil.

To be sure, the Italian decision was appended by a caveat that prohibited deceit or false pretences when needy people beg from other people. In other words, as long as needy people do not fake their condition, whether physical or otherwise, the Italian new ruling would make begging a lawful pursuit that is protected by law. I personally believe that the Italian perspective on this socio-economic phenomenon is defensible on human rights bases. When the economic conditions of any given country is so bad that people cannot find gainful employment and their government cannot foot the bill of their subsistence, then there is every justification to leave poor people free to find income in whatever legitimate way possible. Otherwise, we would be driving the unemployed to crime and that is exactly what we see even in our midst when the rate of theft, burglary and forced entry to homes of unsuspecting people has sky rocketed in recent times. Criminal prosecution alone cannot be expected to solve the problem. In fact, our national record on crime prevention is a living testimony to the ineffectiveness of penal laws to stop people from

stealing from others.

Ramadan is the month when people can be encouraged to help out their less privileged members of their families, neighbours and even strangers who roam the streets in search for some money. There is no doubt that many people who beg do so deceitfully by faking a physical handicap or carrying a crying baby out in the bitter cold or smouldering heat in order to capitalise on the pity or compassion of innocent men and women. This is the kind of people that should be targeted for prosecution and not the "genuine" beggars who are left with no other alternative but to asking money from others. Instead of a blanket denial of the right to beg, there must be additional legislation that would draw a distinction between factual vagrancy on the one hand and false or deceitful manifestation of this economic disorder on the other, so that people who are really in need may find a helping hand through the expression of their real economic condition out in the open where generous or compassionate people may act one way or another on the basis of factual information.

Of course it would be infinitely better if the concerned authorities could find a way of providing minimum wage to the unemployed or earmark budgetary allocations for unemployment benefits. But this is not on the case. Even industrial countries, which have provided their citizens with all sorts of social and economic securities in one form or another, are now abandoning or curtailing these programmes under the strain of dire economic conditions. We cannot expect Jordan, for example, to embark on a new policy of socio-economic security at a time when its economy is no where robust enough to afford such a worthy cause. Given these realities, Jordanians who are forced to seek financial help from the more privileged Jordanians should be allowed to do so without the risk of violating the law. The example of Italy on this issue should be examined and followed since it corresponds with economic logic and allows needy Jordanians to exercise a human right that could guarantee them a roof over their heads and food on their tables.

M. KAHIL



The path to privatisation: Lessons and experiences

By Leheb Abdul Wahab

A DECADE or so ago, the concept of privatisation as a force for economic change was barely acknowledged. Today the concept enjoys full recognition among growing number of nations, in both developing and industrialised countries alike. Moreover, many countries embarking on structural adjustment programmes increasingly use privatisation as an integral element. The "interventionist" development policies of the 1960s, and to some extent, the 1970s, resulted in the creation of a staggering number of state-owned enterprises. These entities are now widely regarded as stumbling blocks in the effort to regain the momentum of growth in the developing world. But the record of those nations that have undertaken privatisation programmes is quite mixed, and even for the more successful ones, no clear blueprint for success emerges.

Even so, there are lessons to be learned from those who have already travelled down this path, and this, despite the paucity of data on privatisation in individual countries, the difficulties of country comparisons, and lack of database analyses on the economic welfare effects.

Why Privatisation?

Economic theory recognises public ownership as a response to the failure of private markets to secure efficient and equitable outcomes. Still when the vast majority of enterprises is state owned, the framework that stimulates competition and efficiency may be mis-

sing. While the key objective of private enterprises is "profit maximisation" state-owned enterprises have to contend with "multiple objectives" — including control of strategic resources, delivery of essential goods and services, social obligations and employment policies — not surprisingly then, when public and private sectors are compared in terms of the cost of producing similar outputs in a competitive environment, the private sector usually outperforms the public sector. Often, state-owned enterprises need to be kept afloat at taxpayers' expense, either through explicit government subsidies such as direct cash grants, or through implicit subsidies, such as subsidised credit, guaranteed sales to the government at fixed prices, reductions of tax liabilities, or preferential exchange rates.

Prerequisites to privatisation

While there are different ways to improve the management of state-owned enterprises, for example by subjecting enterprise to market pressures, privatisation is often seen as the best means to enforce market discipline and promote an efficient allocation and use of resources. But just privatising enterprises is not enough: entire industries have to be restructured to ensure competitiveness if efficiency gains are to materialise, even for natural monopolies it will be necessary to introduce regulation and supervision to reproduce effective competition, otherwise privatised enterprises may be

able to reap substantial monopoly profits, leaving consumers worse off. Hence, improvements in efficiency do not follow from privatisation per se, but from the benefits that increased competition can bring to the market place if it is accompanied by industrial restructuring.

Privatisation is no panacea, however. Hastily conceived or executed, it might achieve very little. Privatisation should thus be seen not as an end, but as a means to higher levels of human development.

The first task must be to ensure that companies are being privatised in an environment conducive to business. Newly privatised companies need to operate in an "enterprise culture" for there to be any real progress. Indeed, changing this culture — by providing adequate training for new entrepreneurs, for example, or ensuring a competitive environment — is probably more significant than changing ownership. And if the enterprise is still a monopoly after privatisation, as is often the case with utilities, it must be subject to suitable controls, otherwise inefficiencies and monopoly power will merely be transferred to the private sector, with the costs being borne by consumers.

Clearly, the poor countries, and those that have only recently adopted the principles of a mixed economy, will find it difficult to create such environments. They may also have limited capacity to manage the privatisation process and trouble finding suitable buyers for enterprises and ensuring that resources are distributed in an equitable way.

Malawi and Papua New Guinea for example, have both struggled to achieve their privatisation objectives because of the difficulty of mobilising savings for equity investment.

The "speed of privatisation" must also be a concern. Building a suitable framework of institutions and regulations takes time, so privatisation should not be rushed — even when there is pressure from financial institutions during structural adjustment programmes, and it may be better to gain experience by starting with smaller enterprises — as Chile, Jamaica, Mexico and Poland did before moving on to larger ones.

Governments should also be realistic about the "revenues" that privatisation can generate. In Malaysia and Sri Lanka, for instance, privatisation proceeds in an average year, produced less than 1 per cent of GDP. Indeed the taxes paid by the newly privatised enterprises have often generated more revenue than the original sale of the assets.

One the other hand, one of the most important issues — and the one usually given least attention — is what the impact of privatisation will be on people. It is usually taken for granted that privatisation has to be accompanied by "unemployment," but this need not be so. With a better sequence of policy measures, much unemployment could be avoided. Restructuring many of the enterprises before they are privatised and making prior efforts to develop alternative employment in the private sector would be much

more rational. And if lay offs are inevitable governments should carry them out before the privatisation. This would help ensure that workers get suitable compensation with possible retraining or access to credit if they want to start their own enterprises. The Egyptian government, for example, in an attempt to allay fears that privatisation will lead to large-scale redundancies, recently issued instructions ordering that 10 per cent of public-sector company shares should be allocated to the Employee Shareholder Associations, a step that should ensure that unemployment after privatisation, is kept to its bare minimum.

Pitfalls associated with privatisation

Privatisation, conceived as one element of a total package, can stimulate private enterprise. Unfortunately, the process in many countries has been very different from this — more of a haphazard sale of public enterprises to favoured individuals and groups — than an integral part of a coherent strategy to encourage private investment.

Privatisation in developing countries, has therefore, had very mixed results. In some cases, as in Mexico and Chile, it has been part of a process of fundamentally altering the organisation of production, with benefits for consumers and the economy as a whole. In too many cases, however, privatisation has taken place for the wrong reasons, under the wrong conditions and in the wrong way. Many countries seem to have been committing

one or more of what the UNDP, 1993 Human Development report dubs, "The Seven Deadly Sins of Privatisation" namely: (1) maximising revenues without creating a competitive environment (2) replacing public monopolies with private ones (3) using non-transparent and arbitrary procedures (4) using the proceeds of finance budget deficit (5) simultaneously crowding the financial market with public borrowing (6) making false promise to labour (7) privatisation without building a political consensus.

The enumeration of these "sins" is a caution not against privatisation, but against privatising within the wrong framework and without a human development purpose in mind. Policy makers can learn much from free and frank exchanges of experience, and from using information from the 80 countries or so that embarked on privatisation strategies in the mid 1980s and early 1990s. To quote John Keynes that "the important thing for governments is not to do things which individuals are doing already and to do them a little better or a little worse, but to do those things which at present are not done at all" fittingly portrays the role of governments in our modern society today.

The writer is an economist at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The views expressed in the above article do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

Prosperous Asia arming up to protect resources

By Robert Birrell

Reuter

BANGKOK — East Asia's fast-growing economies are increasingly able to spend large sums on defence, buying up an array of high technology weapons systems in many cases to protect the resources fuelling their prosperity.

Concerns about any future withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Asia-Pacific region and about China's growing might are also behind the spiralling weapons spending but many leaders dismiss suggestions an arms race is underway.

Regional defence officials and analysts told Reuters the increased military spending was needed to modernise forces and not just to keep up with neighbours.

"There are some examples of Southeast Asian nations buying expensive arms, but it is still not on the level of a full-blown arms race," said Japanese military analyst Haruo Fujii.

"The region of Southeast Asia is one of the last in the world where defence budgets continue to expand in the post cold war era," Derek da Cunha, of Singapore's Institute of South East Asian Studies, told a recent Bangkok defence conference.

A primary factor behind the arms build up was the "increased resources available to the defence sector as a result of robust economic growth," he said.

Singapore fixes annual defence spending at six per cent of projected gross domestic product (GDP).

"This principle is based on the belief that the prerequisite for an effective defence is a sound and prosperous economy," a defence ministry official said.

Tension over the potentially resource-rich Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, claimed in whole or in part by China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan, and the need to protect offshore economic zones are main factors fuelling the drive to upgrade weapons, defence analysts say.

Indonesia recently bought 39 ships from the former East German navy, including tank-landing ships

and mine sweepers.

The protection of offshore resources was also leading to the proliferation of submarines in the region. Indonesian officials say China's expansion in the South China Sea, where Jakarta is developing a \$40 billion offshore gas project, is its main threat.

Indonesia now has two German-built submarines and Singapore said recently it will buy a Swedish submarine for training.

Thailand, citing the need to protect gas fields in the Gulf of Thailand, says it will buy two submarines and has proposed launching a multi-million dollar military spy satellite.

Malaysia is also considering buying submarines and the Philippines is seeking multi-role fighter aircraft under an armed forces modernisation programme as well as long range patrol aircraft, offshore patrol boats and amphibious vessels.

Quick approval of the modernisation programme was widely seen as a result of China's occupation of mischief reef in the disputed Spratly islands last year.

"We want to modernise to perform our job. Our country has resources and we want to protect them," said Philippines defence official Major Jose Vizcarra.

For its part China hotly denies it is the main threat in the region saying the "China threat theory" was spread by "international forces" for their own strategic objectives and was aimed at containing China.

But such denials and a recent proposal to cut its armed forces by 500,000 to 2.5 million do little to reassure some of its neighbours.

Taiwan, China's rival since a civil war ended in 1949, will raise its defence spending by 20 per cent in 1996/97 from the previous year to a record \$11 billion, Taiwanese newspapers reported recently.

"We (the Asia-Pacific region) spent not less than \$476 billion on arms in 1993," Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad told a security conference in Kuala Lumpur this month. "We have the world's biggest military powers and largest military spenders in our midst."

Syria demands timetable for Israeli withdrawal

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Syria demanded Sunday that Israel give a precise timetable for a withdrawal from the Golan Heights, three days ahead of a new round of peace talks between the two countries.

"An Israeli withdrawal to the frontlines of June 4, 1967, must be organised and a precise timetable be drawn up to that effect," Damascus Radio said in a commentary.

Syria's key demand in peace talks with Israel is a full withdrawal from the strategic Golan.

Damascus Radio also said the next round of talks between Israeli and Syrian negotiators outside Washington on Wednesday will be decisive for the peace process.

"We urge the American administration to use all its might to help the upcoming talks to succeed by getting rid of the obstacles the Israelis set to put up on the road to peace," the radio added.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres asked the European Union (EU) on Sunday to make an economic contribution to help Israeli-Syrian peace.

Mr. Peres met the Spanish, Irish and the Italian foreign ministers in occupied Jerusalem and said he hoped for EU investment to help develop the Golan Heights in the event of an Israeli withdrawal from the plateau as part of a peace deal with Syria.

But he also criticised the ministers' decision to visit the Orient House, the unofficial headquarters in East Jerusalem, officials said.

Israel, which has banned the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) political activity in Jerusalem, objects to foreign officials visiting the Orient House.

Ireland's Dick Spring, Suzanne Agnelli of Italy and Carlos Westendorp of Spain later Sunday to meet Yasser Arafat, fresh from his victory in Saturday's Palestinian presidential elections.

The three ministers make up the EU troika of the past, current and future presidents of the 15-member bloc.

Iraq wants oil talks success.

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Raimond's mission was to assess the worsening humanitarian situation in Iraq which Baghdad blames in the continuing U.N. sanctions.

Meanwhile food prices dropped and the dinar rose against the dollar on Sunday as Iraqis hoped the government would agree to the U.N. deal.

Prices of sugar, rice, flour and eggs fell around 20 to 25 per cent since Iraqis heard their government had agreed to hold talks with the United Nations on such sales.

A kilogramme of sugar sold Sunday for 1,100 dinars, down from 1,400 dinars on Thursday, while a kilogramme of rice fetched 800 dinars, down from 1,000 dinars, and a kilogramme of flour 840 dinars, compared to 1,060.

Prices of cooking oil and eggs dropped by a similar amount, as well as locally-produced cigarettes, which cost 4,100 dinars a packet, or 50 dinars less than on Thursday.

A government employee earns around 4,000 to 5,000 dinars per month.

The dinar, meanwhile, stabilised at around 2,150 dinars or one dollar after starting at 2,300 dinars to the dollar on Sunday, currency traders said.

The Iraqi currency traded at 2,650 to the dollar on Thursday, dropping to 2,000 dinars on Saturday after Baghdad Radio said Iraq was waiting for the United Nations to set a time and place for the talks on oil sales.

"The market is unstable, and few people are buying or selling dollars as they wait for the situation to clear up," a trader said.

Some Iraqis thought Baghdad had already agreed to an oil-for-food deal when they heard the Baghdad Radio report, but the authorities have not said whether they want to renegotiate Resolution 986.

Economist Said Samarra told the official Al-Jomhuriyah newspaper he expected the dollar to drop further.

"The dollar has dropped 30 per cent since Iraq announced it agreed to a dialogue with the United Nations, which affects the prices of basic food products," he said.

Iraqis only learned the details of their government's position on Sunday when official newspaper published the letters exchanged between Mr. Aziz and Dr. Ghali.

The Al Thawra newspaper wrote Sunday that Iraq could only count on itself and "not wait for a solution from the Americans" which insist that Baghdad accepts the terms of Resolution 986.

Worn out by the privation of embargo, Baghdad residents showed they were prudently optimistic on Sunday.

"I hope this dialogue will serve as the beginning of the end," Ahmad Hamdan, government employee, said.

"Our situation at the start of Ramadan is not better than last year," he said. "We just look at the goods because our pockets are empty."

"I hope this initiative will improve our living conditions and will be able to meet our most basic needs, notably in food and medicine," Hadi Moussa, a father of four, said.

Independents also gain

(Continued from page 1)

The Fatah deputies include Intissar Al Wazir, wife of assassinated leader Khalil Al Wazir (Abu Jihad), Jameelah Seidm (Um Sabri), a widow of a Fatah leader and an activist herself, and Dalal Saleme. Ms. Wazir and Ms. Seidm, who were elected in Gaza, represent the first female Fatah leaders in the diaspora.

Ms. Salameh rose to prominence in Nabulus during the intifada.

Both Ms. Wazir and Ms. Salameh, are close to the new generation of the more rebellious Fatah leaders like Dr. Ahmad Al Deek. Ms. Wazir's son in law, who secured high votes in the West Bank town of Salfit.

Bahrain praises Jordan

(Continued from page 1)

denounced "terrorism, wherever it comes from" and said the violence was "contrary to Islam and its beliefs."

Mr. Musallam said the unrest, destruction and sabotage operations in Bahrain were really painful, adding that sabotage can in no way bring reform.

"Those who want reform should not carry out sabotage operations and burning of schools and destruction of infrastructure services," the diplomat said, accusing the instigators of the disturbances of receiving instructions from abroad.

He added that such sabotage attempts not only target Bahrain but also neighbouring countries.

He also said "those elements behind the unrest have given a distorted image of Islam through their terrorist acts." Islam is a religion of tolerance and love, he added.

He emphasised that the situation did not require the intervention of the Bahraini army to quell the unrest, and said the security forces had dealt with the unrest wisely and that life was back to normal in the emirate.

'Will it Work Out?' it might, say Zarqa men on stage

By Ghalia Alul

Special to the Jordan Times

ZARQA — "Will it Work Out?"

"It might" believe a group of 14 unemployed young men from Zarqa trying to alleviate their suffering and put their lives back on track.

"Will it Work Out?" is a play which the young men performed along with a professional theatre actress, Tahani Saleem, at the Zarqa Government College on Saturday, with the support of CARE international in Jordan, an international organisation that supports women and men empowerment projects.

But the play was not meant for entertainment purposes. It was a reflection of the young men's lives. The play tackles some of the problems some of young men faced when it addresses alcoholism, drug addiction, unemployment, and other grim realities in the lives of the disadvantaged youth in Jordan.

"I did not expect these men to come out with a professional play, but it succeeded in expressing their problems as well as the problems of people their age," said Fathi Abdul Rahman, the director of the play.

"We are trying to convey a message to the world about our society's concerns," said Khaled Odeh, field officer of the youth project under which the Zarqa men are working.



The Zarqa young men who participated in the play, "Will it Work Out" sit with the director of the play (first left back row) in front of the Zarqa Government college

The youth project aims at helping the disadvantaged youth in Zarqa decide how they want to run their lives, get over their problems and achieve financial independence, said Lubna Izzeddin, youth project coordinator.

She added that through the project, the young men had the chance to discuss their experiences and the experiences of others.

The project helped these men pinpoint their problems and realise where they came from," said Ms. Izzeddin.

Ms. Izzeddin said the PRA activities were centred around the play, which succeeded in bringing out the men's concerns and needs for the future.

Ms. Izzeddin said that by the end of the project, the men will decide on small scale ventures that would generate income as well as social satisfaction.

She said that the men will conduct a business

plan and a market research before starting their ventures, which CARE will finance, adding that they will also receive training to help them run their businesses.

"At first I wanted to join the youth project for financial reasons, but now after I joined, it is not my first priority anymore," said one of the participants, referring to the psychological satisfaction the project gave him.

The project helped me build a new personality and talk about my problems without fear or hesitation. It also helped me get rid of bad friends," said Shihadeh, one of the participants in the project.

Mr. Odetallah told the Jordan Times that the project will hold a seminar for these men where they will have the opportunity to meet with representatives of NGOs in Jordan and discuss their problems and the problems of all the youth.

The meeting will bring together young men from all over the Kingdom. A similar one will be organised for women at a later stage of the project.

Theatre is one of the methods CARE uses in its Youth Project to help the young men and women identify their problems before they are provided with help to open and run their small income generating projects.

Bush defends decision not to oust Saddam

LONDON (R) — Former United States President George Bush said Sunday that history would show the allies were right to end the Gulf war when they did, and not push on to Baghdad in an attempt to topple Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Talking to veteran British interviewer David Frost on BBC Television, Mr. Bush hit out at the "revisionists and smart alecs" who said the Gulf war five years ago should have been prolonged, after its aim of expelling Iraq from Kuwait had been achieved.

"The mission was to end the aggression, it wasn't to decimate, further decimate, the Republican Guard. It wasn't to increase the body count by stacking up another 50,000 Iraqi dead. It was not to go in to find Saddam Hussein," he said.

"I don't think war is immoral, but I don't think you measure the totality of its success by whether you can shoot down, kill another

50,000 fleeing soldiers, murderous though they had been in Kuwait," he added.

Mr. Bush said he had some regrets, in retrospect. For example, the victory could have been symbolised by the surrender of a top Iraqi politician or soldier, "just one step below Saddam."

But it would have been unrealistic to demand that President Saddam himself turn up to "hand over his sword," and Mr. Bush wondered what the allies could have done if President Saddam had refused.

"There we would be, in downtown Baghdad, America occupying a foreign land, searching for this brutal dictator who had the best security in the world, involved in an urban guerrilla war. That is not a formula I wanted to contemplate, and I think history will say we did the right thing," Mr. Bush said.

He said any decision to push on further into Iraq and target President Saddam would have split the coalition,

with some Arab countries and even some European states unlikely to have followed.

So he had no regrets about calling a halt, despite the criticism of "a lot of revisionists and smart alecs sitting out there that didn't have to make the decision about exposing somebody's kid to another day of danger."

Mr. Bush said the United States had never considered using its nuclear weapons in the Gulf war.

"I suppose you could conjure up some horrible scenario that would call for the use of battlefield tactical nuclear weapons or something but it was not something that we really contemplated at all," he said.

If Iraq had had a nuclear capability, and had used it, then all bets would have been off, Mr. Bush said. But he added: "It never came up in the sense of 'let's talk about a real nuclear option' — at least in the White House."

Mr. Bush revealed the extent of U.S. pressure on Israel not to retaliate after Iraqi missiles rained down on it.

Israel wanted to retaliate by air, but the United States knew that, too, would have split the coalition, and denied them all cooperation, he said.

"We said: 'We're not going to give you the codes and thus your aircraft are going to be flying and exposed to the threat of friendly fire'. And they did not like that," Mr. Bush said.

"I know it was in the best interests of Israel's security, though, and in the best interest of coalition solidarity."

Just before the BBC screened this recently-taped interview, it showed for the first time footage of Mr. Bush talking to Mr. Frost in March 1991, soon after the Gulf war ended.

Mr. Bush then spoke of the awful responsibility of deciding to go to war and putting the lives of young people at risk. "You just don't need that," Mr. Bush said, a tear rolling down his face.

Bahraini unrest continues

(Continued from page 1)

Manama's financial and commercial district was peaceful on Sunday and oil industry sources said exports of oil products from Bahrain's oil refinery were running normally.

Gas cylinders have become a favoured weapon in the Shi'ites' conflict with the Sunni-dominated government, which said 24 gas cylinders exploded on Saturday. It also reported 43 fires and said some power transformers were damaged.

An Interior Ministry statement on Saturday said troops "firmly confronted crimes of sabotage which occurred on Friday and continued today in various parts..."

Security forces were increased outside government buildings as blue police vans patrolled the streets on Sunday, the first day of the holy Month of Ramadan.

Bahrain publicly accused Iran for the first time of stirring up the unrest.

"The acts of sabotage cannot be the simple acts of a few subversive elements. These acts are directed, organised and fomented at the right moment from abroad," the official Al Ayyam newspaper said.

"These elements receive their instructions and directives from Oom (the Shiite Muslim holy city) in Iran," it said, adding the accusations were supported by confessions from protestors.

The 8,000-strong Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) on Saturday served notice it was ready to intervene to confront "a terrorist plot" after three days of arson, sabotage and clashes mainly in Shi'ite villages.

It was the first time the army had publicly intervened in the unrest which erupted in December 1994 to demand the release of prisoners and restoration of a parliament dissolved in 1995.

A government official said martial law would only be applied in the country — the Gulf's main financial centre and a strategic U.S. regional ally — if needed and a clear decree calling for its implementation was issued.

Bahrain's allies in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) condemned the violence, expressed solidarity with the troubled country and stressed the principle of "collective security."

The GCC groups Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Bahrain's English-language newspaper Gulf Daily News on Sunday reflected tension created by the latest rioting.

"If sorrow, grief, strain and worry are facts of life — Bahrain has had its fill during the last 14 months," a columnist wrote.

"The situation has deteriorated significantly and all sigh for a return to the good old days, what is happening is beyond belief."

Arafat team sweeps elections

(Continued from page 1)

Salem village near Nabulus a Palestinian policeman shot and killed an election worker counting votes late Saturday.

Looking ahead in the peace process, a senior Palestinian official said Sunday that the way was now clear to scrap articles in the PLO charter calling for the destruction of Israel.

"I believe that now the way is open for a meeting of the Palestine National Council," said Mr. Qouriea.

After the elections, Israel said it would allow the return of exiled PNC members for a meeting on the charter and warned that failure to scrap the anti-Israeli articles could slow down the peace process (see page 2 and page 12).

Israel insists that the 630-member PNC, which last met in 1991 and has several members who are sworn enemies

of the Jewish state, scrap the articles within two months of the council's inauguration.

The council is to hold its first meeting after Ramadan, which ends on Feb. 20.

Newspapers, meanwhile, paid tribute to Mr. Arafat's victory but raised doubts about his ability to establish democratic rule.

"Palestinian society is conservative and traditional. It is doubtful that it can produce the democratic values that we know in the West," said the independent daily Haaretz.

For the mass circulation Yediot Aharonot, "the election process was certainly democratic, but it is too early to say if the regime it put in place will also be."

Only the right-wing Jerusalem Post took a cynical view. "What the world and Israel witnessed yesterday was the birth of the 23rd Arab police state," it said.

World leaders fete Arafat

(Continued from page 1)

Foreign Minister Amr Musa called Mr. Arafat to congratulate him personally, the ministry said. Mr. Musa lauded him for the "democratic atmosphere in which the vote took place" and for the "unanimity of the Palestinian people in choosing him" president.

Opposition Palestinian groups condemned the results of the elections and asserted that Mr. Arafat's

success was false. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) called for new elections.

"This is a false success because the real national council should be one elected by all Palestinians not only in Gaza or the West Bank but also by exiles all over the world," PFLP leader George Habbash told Reuters.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Arafat's spokesman heads list of election losers

GAZA CITY (AFP) — There were 584 losing candidates in the first Palestinian legislative election, but few with the high profile of Marwan Kanafani, former spokesman of Yasser Arafat. Mr. Kanafani, a former professional football goalkeeper in Cairo, failed in his bid to win a seat in the 88-member advisory council from the Gaza City district. He had worked for Mr. Arafat since 1987, eventually becoming his official spokesman. His brother Ghassan, one of the most renowned Palestinian poets, was a leading militant in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine until he was killed by a car bomb in Beirut in 1972. Other senior members of Mr. Arafat's entourage who failed to win election in Saturday's polls included Zakaria Agha, former housing minister in the Palestinian National Authority, defeated in the Gaza Strip, and Hanna Siniora, a well-known newspaper editor defeated in Jerusalem.

Ferry sets sail for Russia after hijacking

ERZLGLI (AFP) — A Black Sea ferry, seized by Chechen sympathisers last week, left this Turkish port for Sochi, Russia on Sunday, two days after its hijackers surrendered. Turkish State Minister Mehmet Sevigen and thousands of Ereğli residents were on hand as the Avrasya, a Panamanian-flagged, Turkish-operated ferry, set sail with its 200-odd passengers, most of them Russian tourists. The ferry was hijacked Tuesday in another Turkish port city, Trabzon, by Turkish supporters of Chechen separatist fighters who battled Russian troops amid a hostage-taking in Dagestan, another Russian republic. Its original destination had been Sochi. The hijackers threatened to blow up the ferry in the Bosphorus Strait, which passes through Istanbul, but gave up Friday after Turkish authorities refused to let them sail the ship into the busy waterway. Nine men are being held in connection with the hijacking. They were expected to be tried in Istanbul's state security court under international law and the Turkish penal code. The ferry spent overnight Saturday in Ereğli where police questioned the passengers in connection with their investigation.

Moroccan king meets Israeli foreign minister

RABAT (R) — King Hassan of Morocco on Saturday held talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak who ended a two-day visit to the country. Moroccan RTM television said, Moroccan Premier Abdul Latif Filali attended the meeting which took place at the Rabat royal palace. RTM said, Mr. Barak, who arrived in Morocco on Friday, said he hoped his visit would reinforce ties between the two countries. Mr. Barak paid tribute to King Hassan's mediation in the Arab-Israeli conflict, which, he said, had helped to achieve rapprochement between Israel and its Arab neighbours, the report said. Morocco and Israel established low-level diplomatic ties in December 1994. Mr. Barak was scheduled to leave Rabat for the United States.

UAE fund finances 8,000 weddings

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A fund created by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to help men meet soaring wedding expenses and encourage them to marry local women has financed more than 8,000 marriages since it was launched four years ago, officials said on Sunday. The Marriage Fund, created by UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan, has provided nearly 560 million dirhams (\$152.5 million) for those weddings, according to Labour and Social Affairs Minister Saif Al Jarwan, who heads the Abu Dhabi-based fund.

Ciller to invite Motherland to form coalition

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's caretaker Prime Minister Tansu Ciller said on Sunday she would ask the conservative Motherland Party (ANAP) this week to form a coalition government with her True Path Party (DYP). "ANAP and DYP, as two sister parties, should form a government," Anatolian news agency quoted Ms. Ciller as saying. President Suleyman Demirel asked Ms. Ciller on Friday to set up a new cabinet after former Premier-designate Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the Islamist Welfare Party which won December polls with a narrow margin, failed to find a coalition partner. Ms. Ciller, who became prime minister in 1993, will meet ANAP Chairman Mesut Yilmaz on Tuesday.

CBJ amends regulations to help exporters

AMMAN (Petra) — The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) Sunday allowed commercial banks to grant loans in foreign currency to exporters to enable them cover their entire export needs without obtaining the prior approval of the CBJ.

In a memo to the banks, the CBJ allowed banks to extend loans covering all the needs of the exporting sector in foreign currency. The new CBJ decision cancels an earlier regulation, allowing banks to grant 50 per cent of their total deposits in foreign currency to finance the export sector's needs.

The new memo left it to

New U.S. GDP gauge raises questions on 90s economy

WASHINGTON (R) — With great fanfare, the government has officially changed its broadest barometer of U.S. economic activity, the gross domestic product (GDP).

But the new gauge is already provoking debate among economists as many charge it portrays the economy's performance during the 1990s as more lackluster than it really has been.

"I do believe it understates the economy's performance," said Bruce Steinberg, economist at Merrill Lynch and Co. "The problem is there hasn't been enough done by the statisticians to improve on those areas where it underestimates growth."

Mr. Steinberg's view that the economy is more robust than recent GDP numbers would suggest is shared by other experts. Much of the problem has to do with the difficulty of incorporating such technological advances as software into the measure of goods and services.

The Commerce Department, which tallies gross domestic product three times per quarter, released Friday showing a moderate 3.2 per cent expansion rate for economy in the third quarter.

The figure garnered wide attention in financial markets in part because its much-heralded release has been delayed several times due to computer glitches and government shutdowns. The report was also closely watched because it marked the official

switch to the department's new "chain-weighted" method of computing GDP.

The chain-weighted gross domestic product phases out the former fixed-weight index that the government had used for 40 years. The new index is intended to provide more accurate readings of inflation-adjusted GDP by using prices that are appropriate to the time period in which GDP is being measured.

The result has been that growth during the early 1990s has appeared slower under the chain index.

That is mainly because the fixed-weight index tended to overvalue the contribution of computers to GDP by failing to account for a steep drop in their prices in recent years.

With the introduction of the chain-weighted measure, the Commerce Department has fixed one factor that tended to bias gross domestic product figures but it has yet to eliminate other flaws that make growth appear slower than it otherwise might.

Some critics of the Commerce Department's efforts have maintained that it should have made all of the changes at once, in order to avoid multiple rewrites of history.

Conceding that there is more work to be done on the GDP, Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, in a news conference Friday, added his voice to the chorus of others saying the economy's strength is being understated.

Arab economy fails to match Asian growth

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Higher oil prices and reforms boosted the Arab economy in 1995 but it remains far behind growth rates achieved in South East Asia, a regional economic expert was quoted on Sunday as saying.

Maabed Al Jarhi, an expert at the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), said the economy of the Arab League's 22 members grew by around three per cent in 1995 compared with less than 2.5 per cent in 1994.

He said the higher growth rate was due to an increase in crude prices and economic restructuring programmes carried out by several member states.

"But such a rate is not sufficient for the Arab economy to occupy a prominent place in the global economy as growth rates in many other countries are much higher," he told the Emirates Today magazine.

"This means that the share of the Arab economy in the world is receding steadily. This could stop only after some Arab countries begin recording a surge in growth rates similar to those in South East Asia," he explained.

Most Arab countries have launched reforms or announced similar plans to tackle their economic problems, mainly slow growth rates, unemployment and inflation, accumulating debt and deficits in the budget and balance of payments.

In the oil-rich Gulf, where such problems had been virtually non-existent during the oil boom 15 years ago, most regional nations have embarked on privatisations and other reform programmes to repair economic damage caused by a sharp decline in crude prices over the past decade.

Mr. Jarhi said Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states — Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — recorded a real growth rate of around three per cent in 1995 compared with less than two per cent in 1994. He attributed the upturn to an increase in crude prices.

Group of Seven shrugs off slowdown, welcomes stronger dollar

PARIS (R) — Economic policy-makers from the world's seven richest nations Sunday dismissed fears that sharply slowing European economic growth could trigger global recession, saying conditions were ripe for a rebound.

"We concluded that despite a temporary slowdown in activity in most of our countries in the last few months, the necessary underlying economic conditions for a sustained recovery appear to be in place," French Finance Minister Jean Arthuis told reporters after a one-day meeting of the Group of Seven (G-7).

Finance ministers and central bankers welcomed a recent rise in the dollar as helpful to the world economy, and saw room for it to rise further, particularly against European currencies.

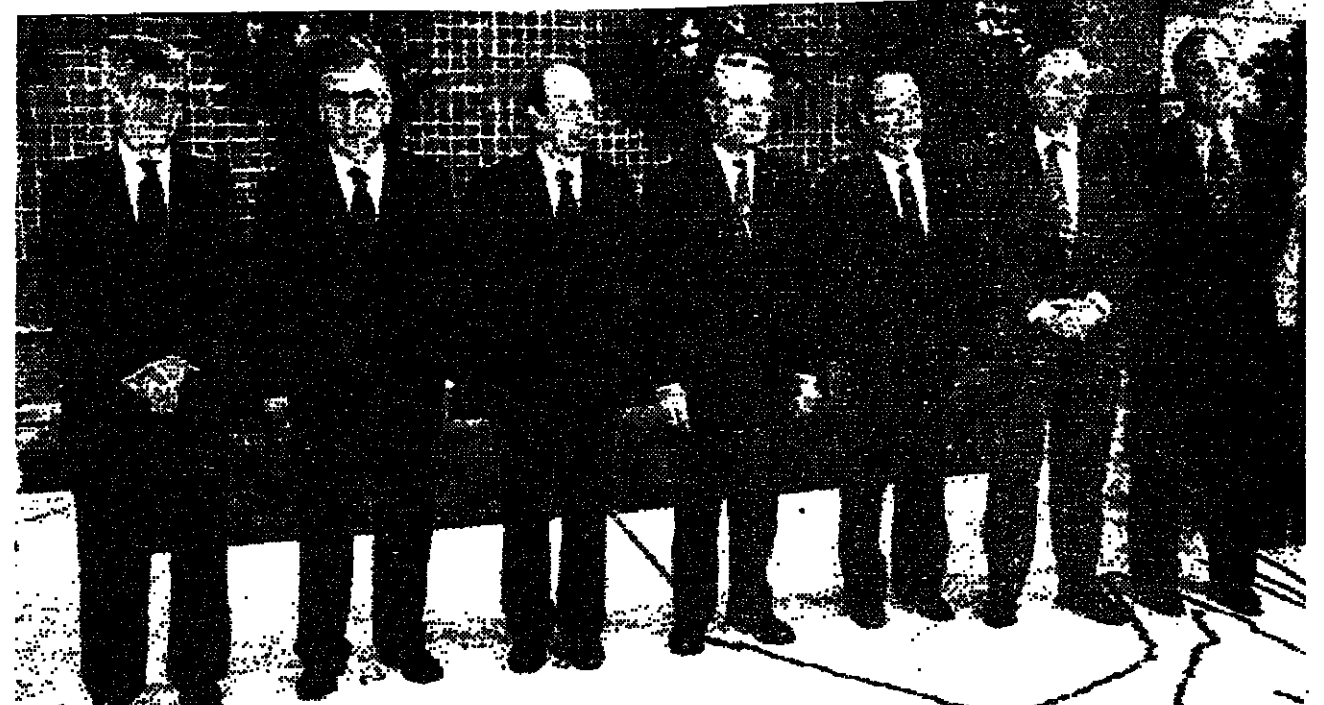
The dollar has risen just over six per cent against the mark since the last G-7 meeting in October, helping restore balance to the world economy by making European exports cheaper.

"This is an important development which can certainly be continued," Bundesbank President Hans Tietmeyer told reporters.

Mr. Arthuis, who chaired the talks, said he would like to see the dollar show the same recovery against European currencies as it has shown against the yen. It has risen some 30 per cent against the Japanese currency since April last year.

There was some difference on the significance of the slowdown in Germany and France, Europe's two biggest economies, which has sent unemployment rising again and raised doubt about plans for a single European currency by 1999.

While outgoing Italian Prime Minister Lamberto



Ministers from the world's richest nations pose for a family photo at the French finance ministry Saturday. (Left to right) U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, Germany's

Theo Weigel, Italy's Lamberto Dini, France's Jean Arthuis, Japan's Wataru Kubo, United Kingdom's Kenneth Clarke and Canada's Paul Martin (Reuters photo)

Dini said there was no great worry about growth, U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers told reporters the G-7 saw slowing European growth as a "source of concern."

German Finance Minister Theo Weigel told the meeting the world faced a pause in growth, with stagnation particularly in Europe and weakness also evident in the United States.

But he added in a statement: "There is no justification whatever for fears of recession."

Mr. Weigel reported concern about political instability in Russia, due to renewed fighting in Chechnya, the strong vote for communists and ultra-nationalists in last month's parliamentary elections and the replacement of key pro-Western reformers in President Boris Yeltsin's

administration.

"We are worried about the political uncertainty and the fact that this is also linked to International Monetary Fund (IMF) requirements," Mr. Weigel said.

In a veiled warning to Moscow against going back on reform, he said Russia would only get the funding and debt rescheduling it sought if it stuck to the terms of its IMF agreement.

On Western economies, Bank of France Governor Jean-Claude Trichet said there was a strong consensus on the need to cut budget deficits and make structural reforms.

France recently suffered a

24-day public service strike by workers fighting welfare cuts designed to cut budget deficits to help Paris qualify for European monetary union.

Mr. Weigel insisted governments must keep up the fight against excessive budget deficits, enshrined in the Maastricht treaty on European monetary union.

"(Europe's) joint consolidation strategy laid down in the Maastricht treaty is no economy killer," he said.

The G-7 — the United States, Germany, Japan, France, Italy, Canada and Britain — did not prescribe any miracle cure to revive

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Don't let an early disagreement upset you, and get busy at whatever is of a constructive nature and make big headway.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Get busy and promote the creative ideas you have even though you think you should be working on a new project.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Don't let an early concern about gaining a personal aim, and get busy trying to please those who dwell with you.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Forget some secret anxiety and get busy on communications and plan for travel. Accomplish something constructive.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get busy handling practical and financial affairs today and avoid one who likes to gossip and waste your time.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) It is important that you handle personal affairs well today and forget about other duties which are not so vital to your welfare.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You want to run off to new activities today, but it is better to clear the slate of accumulated duties first.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) First handle a pressing responsibility and later today you will be able to handle your personal goals and gain them.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Avoid a bigwig who is irate and looking for a whipping boy. Concentrate on coming to an agreement with a fellow associate.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) It is important that you handle your tasks more precisely today and get greater benefits therefrom.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Keep rooted to your career activities and get much accomplished. Forget about having a good time which could cost you a pretty penny.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Much talk with partners can bring fine results, so get at this early in the day. Be active and happy.

Birthstone of January: Garnet-Rose Quartz

THE Daily Crossword by Don Johnson

ACROSS

- Togae
- Cultivate
- Thick piece
- Up — (cornered)
- Kirghiz mountain range
- Have dreams
- Zagora, Bulgaria
- Garlands
- Showy flower
- Luau treat
- Smart aleck
- Family circle member
- Chess piece
- Yeams for
- Makes sense
- Fed the pot
- Cache
- Actress
- Farrow
- Blackthorn
- Beaut
- Warbled
- Sailor
- Follow
- Writer Bret
- Musical work
- Mongolian
- Lamprey
- Tough fabric
- Ignoramus
- Ancient
- Orient
- Midday
- Get Your Gun
- Whimper
- Departed
- Christopher of films
- Take — leave it
- Toboggan
- Eye problems: var.

DOWN

- File
- Conductor
- Kemper
- Idea
- Poetic word
- Marine plant
- Deceitful
- To shelter
- Weather forecast
- Jumble
- Cringe
- Weaving machine
- Church part
- Suds
- Science: suff.
- Per
- Words of understanding
- Spars
- Tooth filling
- Actor Keach
- Fastener
- Well-informed investors
- Mountains, UT
- Beeper
- Actor Connery
- Nurses
- Pakistan garment
- Besides
- Aircraft shelters
- Alloy for tableware
- Sawbuck
- Military cap
- Of shipping: abbr.
- European capital
- Implement
- Sharpen
- "One Life to —"
- Low grades
- Seine

Yesterday's puzzle solved

PEER	PROFS	SPAT
ALVA	REVUE	WISE
LIEN	OVERT	ANTA
LARKSPUR	SANTOS	
LOOP	CUSS	
STEEPS	SUPPOSED	
TED	TARGET	SNARE
APED	LIBER	GRAB
REMUS	ATRED	ISA
TEACHING	PURSER	
KENT	DELE	
BEDLAM	GULLIBLE	
ONEI	ATOLL	NAIL
STAN	TEASE	ERMA
SOING	ENDED	DEAL

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

Peanuts

Andy Cap

Mutt'n Jeff

Business
In
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Jordan Times
Self Reporter
JORDAN TIMES
DAJANI
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ext 223
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Mobi P

Indian trade promotion week seen a major step to boost ties with Jordan

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — An Indian trade promotion week held in Amman was major step towards enhancing Jordanian awareness of the facilities and potential available for industrial and trade cooperation with India, which sees the Kingdom as a key point of entry to the Middle East, a senior Indian diplomat said Sunday.

Sanjay Panda, second secretary and commercial attaché at the Indian embassy here, said that 400 Jordanian

businessmen took part in the Jan. 14-20 trade promotion week.

They were given a basic information kit on the Indian economy and the evolution of industries in the sub-continent, which ranks as the 10th largest industrialised country in the world.

Those who wanted more detailed information immediately were offered a constantly updated computer data base.

Mr. Panda described the event, which was not a formal affair with ceremonies or high-level official participa-

tion, as a major success in terms of disseminating information about India and the country's technological advance.

"The event showed that there is high interest among Jordanians to explore possibilities of cooperation with India," Mr. Panda told the Jordan Times.

The main objective of the trade promotion week was to impart information on the opportunities available in India for investments as well as industrial cooperation that would benefit the private sectors of the two countries, said

Mr. Panda.

While prospects of direct Jordanian investments in India remain ambiguous at this point, given the Kingdom's own efforts to attract foreign investments, Jordanian industries could benefit from Indian technology for joint ventures with the Middle East as the main market.

"Indian businessmen have come to realise that Jordan could be the thrust area into the Middle East and could serve as a major regional centre for business," said Mr. Panda.

Two-way trade between Jordan and India was over \$200 million in 1995, with the balance strongly in favour of the Kingdom, one of India's major sources of phosphates and potash.

While India is indeed interested in increasing its exports to Jordan, it does not want to "dislocate" the trade balance. The quality of Indian products is consistently being improved in view of international competition at home after the government launched a wide liberalisation programme in 1991, said Mr. Panda.

As such, he said, India is confident that an increase in Indian exports to Jordan will be natural, and the country is more interested at this point in time to expose its liberalised economy and technical progress to Jordanians.

The head of the Indian Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry visited Jordan last year and signed an agreement on cooperation with the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce and the Am-

man Chamber of Industry.

He said at that time setting a \$500 million target for two-way trade by the year 1997 was realistic and that Indian businessmen would be closely following up all efforts to achieve that objective.

Indian exports in the last three years have grown dramatically, with an annual average of more than 25 per cent, after the government lifted decades-old controls and restrictions and launched the liberalisation programme.

Tens of billions of international investment flowed to India in the last three years, most of them from well-known multinationals eyeing the strong purchasing power of the 300 million plus Indian middle class.

As a result, Indian manufacturers had to improve the quality of their own products to be able to compete with that of the new entities working with foreign technology. This in itself, according to experts, was a major achievement for the Indian industrial sector.

Another key advantage India has is its vast manpower, skilled, semi-skilled and non-skilled. Labour costs in India are among the cheapest in the world, allowing the country to offer itself as a haven for those seeking low production costs.

The India trade promotion week was part of an action programme envisaged under the agreement signed by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and its Jordanian counterpart last year.

Beirut Stock Exchange reopens today after 13 years

BEIRUT (R) — The Beirut Stock Exchange (BSE), the most active in the Middle East before the bombs of Lebanon's civil war closed it, is set to resume trading Monday after nearly 13 years.

Market officials and stockbrokers expect quiet trading on reopening day, with only three stocks listed of the 42 quoted when the BSE closed in 1983, but the event is a big step forward in Lebanon's bid to regain its role as a financial centre.

"Many companies did not have time to prepare their files for listing on Monday," BSE Chairman Gabriel Schnaoui told Reuters. "I suppose in 10 days new companies will come in and after three months the numbers will grow faster."

A member of one of the five authorised brokerage houses welcomed the reopening but said it would be quiet. "It's a beginning, but I think the Beirut financial market is small and thin and illiquid at the moment," he said.

He doubted foreigners would be interested in the three shares and expected little interest from Lebanese investors.

"With the high interest rates we have in Beirut now, who is going to invest in shares?" he said. One-year Lebanese lira treasury bills yield over 18 per cent plus three per cent currency appreciation against the U.S. dollar and 60-day central bank certificates of deposit earn 16 per cent per annum.

But at least one foreign finance house, Robert Fleming Securities of London, says it was clients interested in investing, and the government of Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri, who is masterminding Lebanon's reconstruction, sees the reopening as crucial to reviving Lebanon's financial markets.

Mr. Hariri hopes the BSE will eventually become a conduit for large sums of money to flow in.

The three companies to be traded Monday have a total capitalisation of up to \$500 million compared with Lebanon's estimated gross domestic product of about \$8.5 billion.

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Municipality of Greater Amman considers building tunnel at Abdali

☆☆ SOURCES AT the Municipality of Greater Amman said the building of a tunnel was being considered at the intersection of the Cooperative Organisation in Abdali as one of the solutions to ease the traffic congestion that will result towards Abdali after the opening of the overpass being constructed at the Ministry of Interior Circle. The overpass will facilitate the traffic flow on the circle but will cause congestion at the traffic light near the Cooperative Organisation. Municipality personnel are studying alternatives to ensure smooth traffic flow at the intersection. Should a tunnel be built, it will be 65 metres long and cars coming from the Ministry of Interior Circle will enter the tunnel before the traffic lights and exit from an area close to the General Command for the Armed Forces. Other directions will remain the same. Meanwhile, work on the overpass is continuing and is expected to be completed on schedule in March 1996 (Al Ra'i).

ACC boosts lending to farmers to JD 19.35 million in 1995

☆☆ LOANS EXTENDED by the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) totalled JD 19.35 million last year, nearly 35 per cent higher than the preceding year's JD 14.31 million. According to Mohammad Abdul Salam Arabiyat, the ACC's director-general, 725 farmers benefited from the loans in 1995. The credits, which were extended by the ACC's 19 branches, were given to finance 6,391 agricultural projects. Mr. Arabiyat said 65 per cent of the borrowers were obtaining loans for the first time and that development loans for less than JD 10,000 accounted for 75 per cent of the overall 1995 credits. Farmers owning land less than 30 dunums obtained 82 per cent of the loans, he added, pointing out small farmers were the ones who mostly benefited of the loans.

The ACC chief indicated that under several programmes to lend to rural families, to diversify income sources and to help unemployed groups, the corporation extended a total of JD 6 million of loans benefitting 1,776 farmers. The programmes are run in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Employment and Development Fund.

Repayment of the loans in 1995 totalled JD 15.24 million compared to JD 12.34 million in 1994, Mr. Arabiyat said. The ratio of overall collection to the amounts overdue was 71.2 per cent which is the highest ratio achieved since the ACC was set up. Collection at some branches was as high as 91 per cent in Salt, 89 per cent in Tafleh, 87 per cent in Maan, 85 per cent in Zarqa and 82 per cent in Amman. Total outstanding loans at the end of 1995 amounted to JD 73.6 million whereas the ACC's total assets stood at JD 86 million at the end of last year (Al Ra'i).

Financing needed for dam projects

☆☆ THE JORDAN Valley Authority (JVA) has completed studies to build three dams in Maan Governorate, and is now awaiting the outcome of efforts to secure financing of these projects. There are also three dams in Tafleh, Madaba and Karak which need financing after the completion of studies for building them. Studies to build three dams in Karak are expected to be completed by the end of this year (Al Ra'i).

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - GROUND FLOOR				
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179				
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 21/01/1996				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	4240	1015020	235.000	240.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	1450	6281	4.370	4.380
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	1450	1708	1.210	1.200
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	3600	9466	2.650	2.630
THE HOUSING BANK	678	3203	4.730	4.800
JORDAN KINAT BANK	180	413	2.300	2.750
JORDAN GULF BANK	16400	17369	1.050	1.060
JORDAN INVESTMENT & STRANAGE BANK	1800	6628	3.690	3.720
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	1000	3520	3.530	3.530
BETT ELMAL SAVINGS & INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	1700	1270	3.100	3.120
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	2400	4698	1.960	1.970
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	7750	11003	1.420	1.420
BANKS SECTOR	45690	1084869	INDEX NUMBER: 289.34	CHANGE: +11.731
JORDAN FIRE INSURANCE	600	1638	2.740	2.730
JORDAN GULF INSURANCE	4000	11050	2.700	2.650
INSURANCE SECTOR	4600	12688	INDEX NUMBER: 129.20	CHANGE: -0.051
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	14300	24495	1.720	1.720
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	2300	3910	1.690	1.700
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	3000	2983	980	1.000
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & CONCORDS HOTELS	500	1100	2.180	2.200
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	500	1708	3.400	3.410
BARKA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	250	303	1.210	1.210
UNION LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	3000	2955	.990	.980
SERVICES SECTOR	23850	37450	INDEX NUMBER: 127.40	CHANGE: +40.151
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	19706	71514	3.620	3.630
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	1250	4083	3.250	3.250
THE ARAB POTASH	2506	1266	5.450	5.460
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	868	8601	9.860	9.860
PBS INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	1630	5941	3.640	3.650
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	3235	15082	4.700	4.680
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	500	3085	6.130	6.130
JORDAN PAPER & CARDBOARD FACTORIES	2300	766	3.900	3.820
BARIA INDUSTRIES	150	323	2.140	2.150
DAR N. DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	550	3933	7.120	7.150
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	17500	10150	.580	.580
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Tourists to Egypt top 3m for first time since 1992

CAIRO (AFP) — The number of visitors to Egypt topped three million in 1995 for the first time since Muslim militants began a violent campaign in 1992 which ravaged the country's tourism industry.

A total of 3.13 million tourists came to Egypt in 1995, up 21.4 per cent from 1994, a tourism ministry report received by AFP on Sunday said.

Egypt has launched a major tourism publicity campaign in the past two years in a bid to repair the damage done to the industry by Muslim militant attacks that have

killed 12 Western visitors since March 1992.

The number of nights spent by tourists in Egypt in 1995 jumped by 32.5 per cent from 1994 to reach 20.45 million, the report said.

It did not give the revenue generated by tourism in 1995. In September Tourism Minister Mamdouh Al Beltagui said he expected tourism income to exceed \$2 billion for the first time since 1992.

In 1992 tourism, one of the country's main foreign currency earners, brought in \$2.2 billion, but income plunged to \$1.3 billion in 1993 and \$1.5 billion in 1994.

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Foreign Exchange Market Summary (January 16-19, 1996)

AMMAN — The U.S. unit appreciated sharply against the mark and sterling last week, while stabilising against the yen. It ended the week 2.47 per cent higher against the mark and 2.39 per cent higher against sterling.

While New York closed on an official holiday Monday, the dollar appreciated sharply against the mark and modestly against the yen and sterling. Reports indicated that the dollar's rise was attributed to the perception that the Japanese and German government officials believe that higher dollar will stimulate their economies by improving the competitiveness of their exports. The dollar was also supported by dealers' expectations that the Bundesbank might ease its monetary policy soon.

The U.S. unit continued its appreciation against the mark and sterling Wednesday, while depreciating marginally against the yen. The dollar rose on expectations that the Group of Seven meeting in Paris at the end of the week may seek a stronger dollar to offset the economic slowdown that is witnessed by several European countries. Expectations that several European central banks may lower their interest rates also lent support to the dollar.

The U.S. unit witnessed modest gains against the mark and sterling Thursday, while depreciating marginally against the yen. Reports indicated that dealers were awaiting the Group of Seven meeting at the end of the week. Meanwhile, the Bundesbank kept its interest rates unchanged after its council meeting later that day.

The dollar continued to rise against European currencies at the end of the week, while depreciating marginally against the yen. Reports indicated that the dollar surpassed the 1.48 mark resistance on continued expectations that the Group of Seven meeting will support the dollar's rise. Meanwhile, several U.S. economic reports were released Friday pointing to a healthy economy. The non-farm payrolls rose by a better than expected 151,000 in December compared to a rise of 166,000 in November. The U.S. third quarter gross domestic product was revised upward from three per cent to 3.2 per cent.

The U.S. unit, thus, ended the week at 1.4803 marks, 105.33 yen and at \$1.5105 to the pound.

Source: Reuters

Currency	Jan. 13 - 1996		Jan. 19 - 1996	
	1 Month (%)	1 Year (%)	1 Month (%)	1 Year (%)
U.S. Dollar	5.47	5.40	5.43	5.06
Sterling Pound	0.44	6.25	6.19	5.94
Deutsche Mark	3.56	3.35	3.48	3.21
Swiss Franc	1.64	1.80	1.62	1.57
French Franc	4.55	4.66	4.34	4.39
Japanese Yen	0.37	0.62	0.32	0.49

Source: Reuters

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: January - 21 - 1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0676	1.0729
Deutsche Mark	0.4775	0.4799
Swiss Franc	0.5928	0.5958
French Franc	0.1400	0.1407
Japanese Yen	0.6707	0.6743
Dutch Guilder	0.4270	0.4291
Swedish Krona	-	-
Italian Lira	0.0447	0.0449

Newcastle in the clear as Liverpool crush Leeds

LONDON (AFP) — Newcastle lifted the gloom left by recent Cup defeats to open up a 12 points lead at the top of the Premiership with a 2-1 victory over basement club Bolton on Saturday.

It was not a vintage performance from Newcastle, dumped out of the FA Cup by Chelsea on Wednesday, but victory increases the pressure on Manchester United who travel to West Ham on Monday.

United slipped into third spot for the first time this season after bitter rivals Liverpool moved into title contention with a thumping 5-0 win over in-form Leeds who had Irish full-back Gary Kelly sent off half an hour from time.

Newcastle, who are also out of the League Cup after a 2-0 upset at Arsenal ten days ago, can now concentrate their efforts on winning their first championship title since 1927.

"We can ask no more of our players and they are desperate to win the league. But we have some tough places to visit," said manager Kevin Keegan after Newcastle's 12th home league win of the season.

Goals from Paul Kitson and Peter Beardsley — his 100th league goal for the club — helped them overcome bottom-of-the-table Bolton who have now taken just one point away from home from a possible 42.

The leaders took the lead on nine minutes when Kitson met Beardsley's cross with a powerful header.

Bolton, though, gave as good as they got and Gudni Bergsson managed to grab an equalised ten minutes later when the Icelandic international out jumped the Newcastle defence to head home from a Scott Sellers' free-kick.

free-kick.

Keegan refused to comment on reports that he had signed Colombian striker Faustina Asprilla from Parma for six million pounds (about \$10 million), adding: "Be careful what you print lads, you could end up with egg on your faces."

Elsewhere, in-form Leeds crashed to their heaviest defeat at Anfield for more than 30 years as Liverpool enjoyed a goal feast after Kelly was sent off for a serious foul on Rob Jones.

Neil Ruddock broke the deadlock in the 27th minute with the first of his two goals — but the turning point was Kelly's 62nd minute foul on Jones which led to the red card and allowed Robbie Fowler to add a second from the spot.

Fowler claimed another six minutes later before Stan Collymore and Ruddock completed the rout with two in the final two minutes.

Andrei Kanchelskii's strike with six minutes left earned Everton a 2-1 victory over injury-hit Arsenal at Highbury.

Ian Wright, captain for the day in the absence of Tony Adams, fired the Gunners into a 38th minute lead but Graham Stuart equalised five minutes after the break.

Chelsea claimed a 1-0 victory at Stamford Bridge thanks to John Spencer's seventh goal of the season — stretching Nottingham Forest's run without a Premiership away win to over three months.

Alan Shearer remains the Premiership's top scorer after taking his tally to the season to 27 with the opener in Blackburn's 3-0 Ewood Park victory over Sheffield Wednesday.

Metz close on leaders

PARIS (AFP) — Metz sliced two points off Paris St. Germain's lead at the top of the French first division Saturday night when they beat Strasbourg 2-1 after PSG's disappointing 1-1 draw against Le Havre.

Le Havre's 80th minute equaliser on Friday night had opened the way for both Metz and Lens — the two sides sharing 41 points — and Metz took full advantage, cutting PSG's lead from

seven points to four, after opening the scoring through Cyrille Pouget after five minutes.

Former international Frank Sauze equalised from a free-kick on 70 minutes, but Sana N'Diaye struck Metz' winner into an open goal four minutes later after a mix-up in the Strasbourg defence.

Metz had been the runaway leaders at the start of the season, before a string of defeats looked to have put

them out of the running.

Lens missed their chance when they were held 0-0 by Nice and Auxerre moved into third place after Lidian Laslandes scored the only goal of their game against Cannes, volleying home after his header had hit the bar.

Reigning champions Nantes suffered a humiliating 2-1 defeat at home against relegation strugglers Lille after being a goal up.

African Nations Cup Zambia thrash 10-man Burkina Faso 5-1

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Zambia thrashed 10-man Burkina Faso in their African Nations Cup Group B match in Bloemfontein on Saturday to shoot to the top of Group B on goal difference.

Kalusha Bwalya scored twice, and Kenneth Malitoli, Dennis Lota and Johnson Bwalya hit the others. And to make matters worse for Burkina, Hassane Kamagate was sent off for striking Vincent Mutale in the face.

But Burkina's Yssouf Traore pulled a goal back in the 52nd minute, two minutes after replacing Aboubacary Ouedraogo.

In the other match, Mark Williams scored a 57th minute winner as South Africa struggled to beat Angola 1-0. However Clive Barker's team are top of Group A with six points and almost certain of qualifying for the quarter-finals.

But the day belonged to Zambia's action-packed display. And sympathy surely must be felt for keeper Ibrahim Diarra, who must have got back ache picking the ball out of the net.

The 1994 runners-up came within just one goal of equalling Ivory Coast's 6-1 thrashing of Ethiopia in 1970 — the biggest winning margin and most goals scored by one side in the finals' history.

Kalusha Bwalya hit a superb free-kick into the area in the 18th minute, and Malitoli and most goals scored by one side in the finals' history.

Kalusha Bwalya himself made it 2-0 when he knocked in a free-kick just outside the area into the top left-hand corner of the goal in the 25th minute.

Then in the 32nd minute Kamagate, lying on the floor,

swung an arm at Mutale, which struck him in the face. Japanese referee Masayoshi Okada had no hesitation in sending Kamagate off, the first dismissal of the tournament.

In the 34th minute, Kalusha Bwalya, intercepting a bad clearance by Oussem Diop, chipped keeper Ibrahim Diarra for their third goal.

With a minute till half-time, striker Dennis Lota, well set up by Kenneth Malitoli, turned and scored from the edge of the box.

And seconds before the break, Johnson Bwalya scored Zambia's fifth.

But Burkina Faso, the first team to have no chance of making the quarter-finals, had one moment of glory.

Yssouf Traore easily beat Zambia keeper James Phiri from six yards seven minutes after the interval.

In Saturday's other match at Johannesburg, Williams' opportunist goal meant South Africa, 1-0 winners over Angola, are virtually certain to reach the last eight.

South Africa seemed unsettled by the wet conditions and looked a different side from the exuberant team which thrashed Cameroon 3-0 in the opening match of the tournament last Saturday.

Yebao: Africans lack discipline: Ghana's Leeds United star Anthony Yebao believed discipline was the major problem of African players. He said unlike Europeans, Africans tend to get distracted during a match thinking they have done enough. Yebao honed in on Nigeria's loss to Italy in the World Cup second round in the 1994 World Cup as an example of bad discipline. "If they had had kept more disciplined, Nigeria would have won," said Yebao.



Atlanta Hawks Andrew Lang goes up for a basket through the arms of Philadelphia 76ers NBA action (Reuters photo)

Grizzlies upset New York Knicks

VANCOUVER (R) — Greg Anthony and Bryant Reeves each scored 14 points and Byron Scott hit a key jumper down the stretch as the Vancouver Grizzlies defeated the New York Knicks, 84-80 on Saturday.

Scott nailed a 14-footer as the shot clock expired with 16 seconds to go to give the Grizzlies an 83-80 lead.

After New York's Patrick Ewing missed an open baseline jumper, Anthony Aveni made one free throw with six seconds left to seal the game.

Blue Edwards added 13 points for Vancouver, which won for just the second time in seven games.

In Atlanta, Grant Long scored 20 points, including 12 in the decisive third quarter, as the Atlanta Hawks won their seventh straight game, a 98-78 victory over the struggling Miami Heat.

The Hawks trailed by two points at halftime before a 31-12 third quarter gave them a 75-58 lead. Miami shot just 5-for-20 (25 per cent) in the period and tied a season low

for scoring in the third quarter.

In Charlotte, Latrell Sprewell scored 14 of his 20 points in a third-quarter run as the Golden State Warriors snapped a three-game losing streak with a 110-102 victory over the short-handed Charlotte Hornets.

Rookie Joe Smith had 21 points and a season-high 20 rebounds and B.J. Armstrong added 19 for Golden State, who improved to 10-10 against the Eastern Conference.

"We had a lot of guys up for us on the boards tonight," Golden State coach Rick Adelman said.

In Denver, Mitch Richmond scored 22 points and Sarunas Marciulionis added 20 as the Sacramento Kings held on for a 115-110 victory over the Denver Nuggets.

Olden Polynice chipped in 16 points and 13 rebounds for the Kings, who had lost four of their previous six games. The team is off to its best start (22-13) since the 1965-66 season.

Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf poured in 36 points and Dikembe Mutombo had 20 for Denver.

In Los Angeles, Danny

Ferry had 19 points and 10 rebounds and Terrell Brandon added 19 points and 10 assists as the Cleveland Cavaliers defeated the Los Angeles Lakers, 93-82.

The Cavaliers led the entire game until Nick Van Exel's 13-footer tied the score, 53-53, with nine minutes left in the third quarter. The Cavaliers regained the lead on an 18-footer by Chris Mills before the Lakers tied the score for the final time.

Van Exel scored 17 points and Cedric Ceballos added 15 for the Lakers.

At New Jersey, Chris Childs scored a career-high 30 points, including five free throws in the final two minutes of overtime, as the undermanned New Jersey Nets pulled out a 103-97 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

The Nets played without guards Kendall Gill and Khalid Reeves, who were acquired from the Charlotte Hornets on Friday for guard Kenny Anderson and Gerald Glass. Reeves has an injured left ankle and the deal is being held up until the Nets get a clean bill of health on the ailment.

RESULTS

Atlanta	98	Miami	78
Golden State	110	Charlotte	102
New Jersey	103	Minnesota	97 (OT)
Sacramento	115	Denver	110
Vancouver	84	New York	80
Utah	106	LA Clippers	82
Cleveland	93	LA Lakers	82

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Telecommunications Corporation Amendment to the closing date of tender No. 79/95

Integrated Software & Hardware Solution
The Telecommunications Corporation hereby announces an amendment to the closing date of tender No. 79/95 (Integrated Software & Hardware). The amended closing date will be on Saturday, Feb. 10th, 1996 instead of Sunday, Feb. 4th, 1996. The closing time is 12:00 noon.
Director General
Eng. Walid Dawik

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠A76 ♣J5 ♠K104 ♠AQ63
Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one diamond. What action do you take?
A - You can't double because of your shortness in the major suits. Had East passed, you would have opened one no trump, and with such good stoppers in the enemy suit, make that bid now. An overcall of one no trump shows the same hand as a no-trump opener, although you could be a little on the heavy side.
Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠10763 ♠KQ66 ♠Q7 ♠Q83
The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
What do you bid now?
A - Partner's bid asks for help in the diamond suit for game, and you're not quite sure whether you hold the right cards. Show partner you still have game interest by bidding three hearts, then abide by his decision.
Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠K98 ♠A10 ♠AQ76 ♠J983
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
What do you bid now?
A - Obviously, it is a matter of rebidding either two no trump or raising to three clubs. With four trumps, prime cards and a ruffing value, not to raise would be an insult to partner and could easily result in missing a slam. Bid three clubs.
Q. 4 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠AKQ73 ♠AS ♠KJ965
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♠ Pass 1♠ Pass
What do you bid now?
A - You have a very good hand, but beware of a possible misfit. Should you jump to three clubs and receive a three-spade rebid, you won't know what to do. Unless partner can act over two clubs, we don't think you're missing anything.
Q. 5 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠KJ943 ♠A7 ♠AJ8542 ♠Void
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♠ Pass 1♠ Pass
What action do you take?
A - A fair hand has grown in stature to an incredible powerhouse, and it is your duty to alert partner to slam possibilities. Our choice is a cue-bid of three clubs, to see how partner reacts.
Q. 6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠8763 ♠9742 ♠QJ72 ♠47
The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♠ Pass 2♠ Pass
What action do you take?
A - You have a horrible hand, but there's no reason to come galloping to partner's rescue yet. If you pass now, you might be able to enter the auction later without misleading partner that you have reasonable values.

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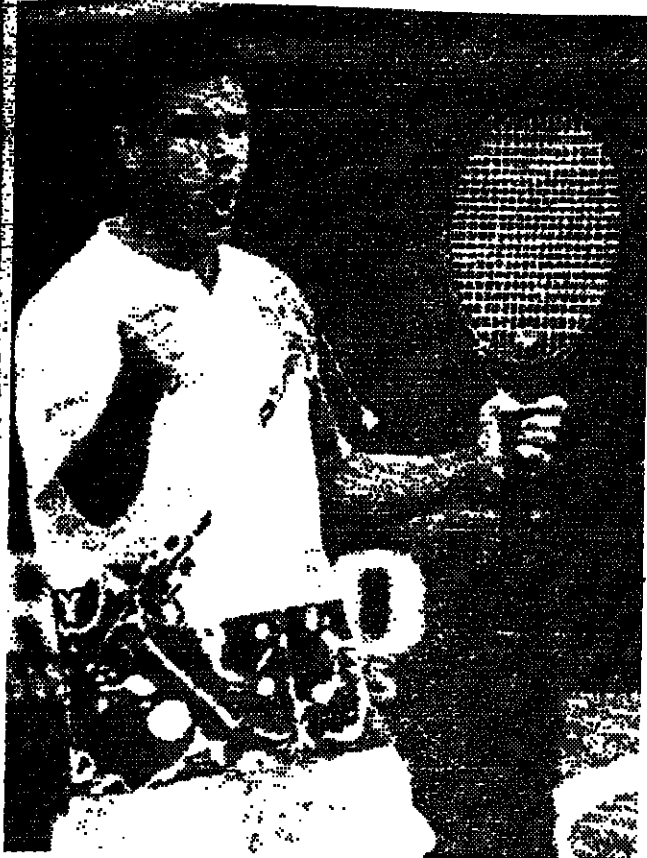
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Muster, Ivanisevic, Sabatini join beaten seeds



Italy's Renzo Furlan jubilates after defeating Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia in their fourth round match at the Australian Open in Melbourne (Reuters photo)

MELBOURNE (Agencies) — Andre Agassi was given a clear path to the Australian Open title and the world number's spot on Sunday after Thomas Muster followed Pete Sampras out of the event in another day of shocks.

Agassi was two sets to one down to determined Swede Jonas Bjorkman, but fought back for a 4-6, 6-2, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 victory to see him into the quarter finals.

Sweden fought back through Mikael Tillstrom, the world number 105, but beat Muster 7-5, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 in a touch over two hours on centre court. The day's other shock came when 10th seed Goran Ivanisevic went out to Italian Renzo Furlan.

Muster had been on course for a semi final showdown with Agassi, from which the winner would take Sampras's place as world number one. The Austrian left-hander, who won 12 titles last season, 11 on clay, appeared troubled by a twisted ankle he injured in his third round win over Swedish qualifier Nicklas Kulti. But he said it played no part in his defeat.

Following Sampras's stunning straight sets defeat to Australian teenager Mark Philippoussis on Saturday, Agassi, who plays Jim Courier in the quarter finals, is now favourite to take back the world number one spot.

Under the labyrinthine machinations of the computer rankings, he can count on nothing, Muster, who went out in the third round at last

year's Australian Open, will still become number one if Agassi loses to Courier.

"It doesn't worry me too much, whatever happens, it happens and I'm here to play tennis and not to make statistics," Muster said.

"It's better to concentrate on my game and that's what I didn't do today and that's why I lost."

Muster said he would respect whatever the computer decided, refusing to get involved in an earlier attack by Courier that the Austrian was not an all round champion.

Muster won the French Open last year. But Courier said until the Austrian could win a Grand Slam title on a non-clay surface he would not be the rightful world number one in his eyes.

"That's his opinion, why should I challenge it," said Muster.

Courier, a winner here in 1992 and 1993, clinched his quarter-final place after clawing back from two sets to one down against South African Marcos Ondruska. He won 7-5, 2-6, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 in three hours 10 minutes.

Agassi underlined the emphasis he is placing on defending his Australian crown here over the next week, when he said: "If I don't win this tournament, I don't want to be ranked number one."

Agassi needed five sets against Argentinian qualifier Gaston Etis in the first round and four sets against American qualifier Steve Bryan in the third round said he was

still not at his peak going into the second week.

"It's nice to be still in the tournament and be good enough to be not at your best, but still give yourself a chance to reach the best at the right time and I still have that opportunity."

Looking ahead to his match with Courier, a rival since their junior days, Agassi said: "I'm looking forward to it, he's definitely a rock'em, sock'em type of tennis player and we have some explosive points, it will be nice to get a shot at beating him."

Ivanisevic became the second prominent men's seed to bow out in a four set third round tie against Furlan carried over from Saturday's rain-affected schedule.

The hard serving Croatian was beaten 6-2, 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 in 127 minutes. Furlan now plays seventh seeded Swede Thomas Enqvist in the fourth round.

Ivanisevic has a poor record at the Australian Open, reaching the quarter finals twice in seven attempts.

In-form Chang is looming as the tournament's quiet threat after he wiped French qualifier Jean-Philippe Fleurian off the court in his fourth successive straight-sets victory.

Chang took just an hour and 13 minutes to finish off the 153rd ranked Fleurian, who shot to prominence by

beating former world number one Stefan Edberg in the Swede's final appearance here.

Teenagers Chanda Rubin and Iva Majoli stormed into the last eight of the Australian Open on Sunday, joining joint world number one Monica Seles who stayed on track for ninth Grand Slam title.

American Rubin upset world number seven Gabriela Sabatini in straight sets as the Argentine's notorious serve let her down again, while Croatia's seventh seeded Majoli had an emphatic 6-2, 6-2 win against Belgium's Sabine Appelmans.

The 19-year-old Rubin, who goes into her second Grand Slam quarter-final, beat number six seed Sabatini 6-2, 6-4 in 76 minutes and could thank her opponent's serve for the ease of her victory.

Sabatini, who blamed the wind and her lack of concentration for 10 double faults, joins defending champion

of wind and the ball was moving a lot and I guess I wasn't quite focused on doing everything, every step I have to do," Sabatini told reporters.

Seles, who had an easy 6-1, 6-3 victory over Naoko Sawamatsu, still looks the favourite to win her first Grand Slam title since her return to tennis last August but Majoli is likely to provide a major test in the quarter-finals.

Fifteen-year-old Swiss prodigy Martina Hingis, who plays 11th seed Brenda Schultz-McCarthy in the fourth round on Monday, could become the third teenager in the last eight.

The 18-year-old Majoli said after defeating Appelmans that she was looking forward to meeting Seles.

"I am just going to try my best and see what happens... she's a great player," said Majoli who played and lost to Seles before the April 1993 stabbing by a crazed Steffi Graf fan in Hamburg which



Thomas Muster of Austria throws his arms up in frustration during his fourth round match against Sweden's Mikael Tillstrom at the Australian Open (Reuters photo)

the ninth-seeded American in their last encounter at the U.S. Open, said she was in control of the match throughout.

"This match was the toughest of the tournament... and it was the best match I've played, I did everything right today," she told reporters.

Seles blitzed the helpless, 15th-seeded Sawamatsu, wrapping up her match in only 68 minutes.

Seles, three-times Australian Open winner and playing here for the first time since her comeback after her stabbing, has dropped only 14 games in her four matches on the way to the last eight.

The 17th ranked Sawamatsu, who reached the quarter-finals here last year, put up some resistance at the beginning of the second set but she was let down by her service. Sawamatsu's fourth-round departure ended the Japanese challenge here as compatriot and qualifier Rika Hiraki also went out on Sunday, losing 6-3, 6-1 to 16th seed Amanda Coetzer of South Africa.

Seles, playing her fourth tournament since her return to the circuit, said daily physiotherapy and stretching exercises had helped a nagging groin strain.



Chanda Rubin of the U.S. smiles during her fourth round match against Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina at the Australian Open in Melbourne (Reuters photo)

Australian Open

Mary Pierce and world number five Kimiko Date as the major casualties in the women's singles in the year's first Grand Slam event.

"Just some days the timing is not good... There was a lot

led to her 28-month absence from the game.

Thirteenth-seeded Rubin, who climbed steadily through the world rankings last year to her current number 14, said she was going into her quarter-final match against world number three Arantxa Sanchez Vicario full of confidence.

"I'm feeling confident every time I walk on to the court and I think the results are now showing that," said Rubin who made it through to her first Grand Slam quarter-final at last year's French Open.

"I just think I'm going to be aggressive (against Arantxa) and try to dictate points and cut down on my errors... I feel like it's anybody's match on Tuesday."

Sanchez Vicario, who has quietly progressed through the early rounds with straight sets victories, came up against her old adversary Mary Joe Fernandez in Sunday's fourth round and won surprisingly easily, 6-3, 6-3. The Spaniard, beaten by



Jim Courier from the U.S. points to outside the line as he disputes a line call during his fourth round match against South Africa's Marcos Ondruska at the Australian Open in Melbourne (Reuters photo)

Ertl out of giant slalom

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy (R) — Germany's Martina Ertl looked sure to lose her overall lead in the women's Alpine Skiing World Cup on Sunday after missing a gate on an icy piste and going out of a giant slalom race.

Ertl, winner of three out of four giants this season, seemed to be having problems with her concentration after crashing during Saturday's downhill on the Olimpia Delle Tofane Piste which is also used for the longest giant slalom of the season.

Germany's Olympic downhill champion Katja Seizinger, winner of the last giant at Maribor, Slovenia, earlier this month, clocked the fastest time of one minute 17.90 seconds through the 58 gates of the Piste which had a drop of 400 metres.

Seizinger, Ertl's room mate, is currently third in the standings on 722 points to Ertl's 784 and would leapfrog ahead if she won the race and the 100 points up for grabs. But much depended on the form of Austria's 1992 Olympic silver medallist Anita Wachter, who was third fastest in 1:18.62 and is currently second overall on 735 points.

Switzerland's Sonja Nef was well placed for victory, clocking the second fastest time of 1:18.52.

Ertl, who complained of a sore thumb and dizziness after Saturday's fall, was third out of the hut on a piste that favoured the downhillers and the early starters.

She was followed out of the race by Slovenia's Mojca Suhadolc, second at Val d'Isere in December and third in a Super-G at the French resort as well.

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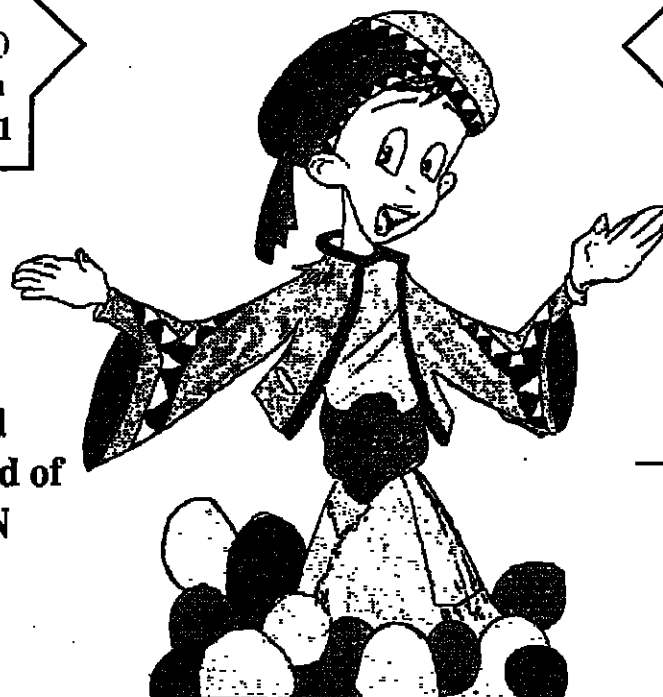
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Palestinian opposition spurns offer of return

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — George Habash, a leading Palestinian opposition figure, refused on Sunday to return to the autonomous areas despite having received permission from Israel.

Dr. Habash, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which boycotted Saturday's self-rule elections, said he refused because his return should not be dependent on Israeli authorisation.

"The right of return to Palestine is a legitimate and inalienable right, and does not depend on an Israeli decision," he said in a statement. "I reaffirm my refusal to return (to the Palestinian areas) while 4.5 million Palestinians are in exile and others are in Israeli prisons."

Israel had authorised Dr. Habash and other members of the Palestine National Council to enter the autonomous territories to participate in discussions on amending parts of the Palestinian charter that call for the destruction of the Jewish state.

"I will return after the creation of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," said Dr. Habash, whose group is based in Damascus and opposes the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy accords with Israel.

PNC members include Dr. Habash, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) leader Nayef Hawatmeh, and Mohammad Abbas, head of the Palestine Liberation Front (see related story on page 2).

All three men lead groups which reject the PLO's peace deals with the Jewish state. They have also been on Israeli security services' wanted list for years and any free return by them to the West Bank or Gaza would incense wide sections of Israeli public opinion.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, in remarks to reporters on Saturday, clearly linked the return of PNC members to the issue of the PLO's charter.

The Israeli leader, in a phone call to Mr. Arafat on Saturday to congratulate him on his triumph, said he now expected the PLO to honour

within two months a pledge it has made since starting peace talks with Israel in 1993 to amend the charter.

If Mr. Arafat "fails to respect his commitments on this, we have all sorts of ways of retaliating," warned Mr. Peres, referring to Israel's army redeployment planned for Hebron in March.

The PLO can only do this by convening the PNC, its legislative branch, which last met in Algeria in 1991.

Dr. Habash did not explicitly rule out returning, saying he had called a meeting of the group's political bureau members to take a "final decision which everybody agrees on."

"But I do not think the political bureau would accept the invitation of Peres," he added.

A spokesman for the DFLP said the right of return was a "holy right for all Palestinians in exile," and said the aim of Mr. Peres' offer was to split Palestinians between themselves.

"Peres' agreeing to allow PNC members enter to the self-rule areas is a studied plan... to secure two thirds of the PNC votes which (Palestinian leader Yasser) Arafat needs to cancel the charter," the DFLP spokesman added.

Mahmoud Abbas, the PLO elections coordinator, told Reuters: "The Israeli government has allowed all PNC members to be given permanent residency in Palestinian areas."

"We asked for this a long time ago and now they have agreed," he said.

Faisal Hussein, who is in charge of Jerusalem affairs for the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), said: "It's a step in the right direction, but Israel must also allow the return of all PLO and Fatah institutions."

Mr. Arafat's spokesman, Nabil Abu Rdaineh, said the exiled PNC would be meeting jointly with the Palestinian legislative council elected Saturday.

"The PNC and the council will be meeting after all the members of the PNC are allowed to come and stay here, when they receive the right to return and their right

to live and their right to move," Mr. Abu Rdaineh told Reuters.

An Israeli official said hundreds of PNC members who had yet to arrive could take up residence in Palestinian-ruled areas.

"They are not restricted to coming and voting. There is no restriction. They can stay," said a senior Israeli government official who declined to be named.

Other Palestinian figures said Mr. Arafat may have a hard time gaining support in the PNC for a change in the charter.

"I'm not sure there will be a favourable vote for amending the charter. There will be a lot of internal debate among Palestinians before they reach a decision," said Ziad Abu Amr, a political scientist who campaigned for the new council.

Ghazi Abu Jayab, a candidate in alliance with council member Haidar Abdul Shafi, said he thought the Palestinians should refuse to make the changes until Israel gave a firm commitment to allow a Palestinian state.

"Arafat doesn't have the right to make a commitment to amend the charter and Israel doesn't have the right to make the request in the first place," he added.

Syria criticised the elections as being neither free nor democratic, saying they did not express the will of the Palestinian people.

"The elections for an autonomy council were the opposite of democracy, liberty and the true expression of the desires of the Palestinian people," the Baath ruling party's newspaper said.

Saturday's elections were "undemocratic, despite the propaganda campaigns led by the backers of the autonomy accord, the monitoring commissions, as well as the claims that the elections would lead to the creation of a Palestinian state," Al Baath said.

"The results of these elections were known in advance, and the victory was solely that of the backers of the accord, excluding any forces opposed to this accord or any attempt to satisfy the interests of all Palestinians," the paper said.



VICTORY: The wife of Ezz Al Shaibeh, former Palestinian youth minister, celebrates with other supporters her husband's victory in Saturday's Palestinian elections from Al Bireh in the West Bank (Reuters photo)

Self-rule vote void at 2 booths

GAZA (R) — The commission running the first Palestinian general elections has disqualified the vote in two Gaza Strip polling centres following complaints of irregularities.

Candidates and their agents also reported abuses in other polling stations in Gaza and the West Bank on Saturday but these were apparently not serious enough for the commission to act on them.

The votes were declared void at a polling station in Deir Al Balah and at another in Jabalya village, elections chief Mahmoud Abbas told Reuters.

At the Jabalya polling station, more than 1,000 Palestinians were registered to vote in the elections for an 88-member legislative council and president of the self-rule authority.

A spokesman for the central elections commission said there had been violations of the law in the polling station. Mohammad Ismail Ali, one of the candidates, told Reuters that some voters had voted more than twice, that police were inside the polling station in strength and that voters had come under pressure to vote for certain candidates.

One of his agents, Zeid Hassan, said he saw a policeman in the same polling station take a stack of ballot papers and fill them all in at his leisure.

"There was deliberate manipulation by one or two of the candidates, so I objected," said Mr. Ali. International and local observers reported chaos at the polling station in Deir Al Balah, Mahmoud Abbas, the elections chief, said in explaining the decision to void that vote.

In a Gaza City constituency, an agent for independent candidates Ahmad Muganna and Zaid Abu Amr said he also saw a policeman mark ballot papers in favour of Mr. Arafat's Fatah movement and putting them in the ballot box.

"I complained to the election officer and he had the policeman thrown out but I believe the same thing was happening elsewhere to some extent," the agent said. Eyewitnesses said Arafat supporters leaned on voters in polling stations in Rafah, at the far south of the Gaza Strip.

Members of Fatah of the Palestinian National Authority's plainclothes police force tried to persuade the voters to vote for Fatah candidates, they said. "Young men from Fatah (gave) them printed lists of the Fatah candidates and they (told) them to vote for them. They also are approaching any illiterates they see and helping them fill in their papers," one eyewitness said.

Independent Rafah candidates Sheikh Awda Abu Adra said some polling stations had up to 30 Fatah agents inside, with Fatah labels on their jackets, giving out the lists. "I myself saw a policeman doing the same but when I complained he didn't stop," he said. "I'm very angry. To whom can you complain about someone whose father's a judge?" he added, quoting an Arabic proverb.

NATO plays down role as Bosnia grave sites guard

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) sought to play down its role as guardian of Bosnia's mass grave sites on Sunday, declaring it would not make promises which could not be kept.

A statement from the NATO-led peace Implementation Force (IFOR) confirmed that it would keep a very close eye on the sites but said peacekeeping troops would not be deployed to guard them.

NATO sources had told reporters on Saturday that IFOR troops were being dispatched, possibly within days, to guard the sites of graves where Bosnian Serbs are accused of hiding the bodies of thousands of murdered Muslims and Croats.

But Sunday's statement quoted IFOR commander Admiral Leighton Smith as saying: "NATO is not, I repeat, NATO is not, going to provide specific security, or in other words guarantee security for teams investigating these grave sites."

He said any help from IFOR would be "consistent with the forces that are available to us, and if it does not interfere with the primary mission that I've been given."

The admiral added: "This is an emotional issue, we are not insensitive to this problem. We will provide whatever support we can, but we won't make promises that we cannot fulfil."

The IFOR statement confirmed that NATO would "conduct airborne reconnaissance of some grave sites in order to obtain photographs and develop intelligence for

the use of IFOR troops that may provide military security in those areas in the future."

Allegations of mass killings form the basis of war crimes indictments issued by a U.N. tribunal against Bosnian Serb "president" Radovan Karadzic and army commander Ratko Mladic.

Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic said meanwhile he would not retain the post in the next government because of a new law that weakens its authority.

"There will be a new prime minister," Mr. Silajdzic told AFP.

The new premier will be Hasan Muratovic, until now minister for relations with IFOR, the state-run news agency BH press said.

He was chosen after an emergency session of the executive board of the ruling Muslim SDA party led by Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, the agency added.

Two weeks ago the Bosnian parliament passed a law that reduces the number of ministers from 12 to six, one of them without portfolio, in a move that practically limits the central government to representing the country abroad.

The Dayton peace accord signed last month called for an acceleration of a long-standing plan to separate Bosnia's central government from that of the Muslim-Croat federation formed in 1994 and which is now the cornerstone of the agreement.

In effect, the law streamlining the central government was passed in accordance

with the peace accord.

In another development, NATO spokesman Colonel Mark Rayner told reporters on Sunday that IFOR's primary concern remained the failure of Serbs, Muslims and Croats to release all prisoners of war (PoWs) by the January 19 deadline laid down in the Dayton accords.

He said: "The time has come for the parties to engage in effective discussions on this... they (the PoWs) should be turned over through the International Committee of the Red Cross immediately."

"Not to do so is a flagrant abuse of human rights and is the single most stark act of non-compliance with the peace agreement. Lip service is not good enough. We now need action by those who signed the Dayton peace agreement."

Admiral Smith warned on Saturday that failure to release prisoners was marring implementation of the Dayton deal.

He said the three ethnic factions could face "enormous pressure," including the loss of financial aid, if they did not release all prisoners soon.

The Muslim-led Bosnian government and Serb military negotiators failed to reach agreement on Saturday on further releases. The government has refused to free all prisoners until it knows the fate of thousands of Muslims who went missing during the 3½-year war.

Some 220 registered prisoners were handed over on Friday, but more than 700 are still being held.

Lebanese accused of German fire; his lawyer denies charge

LUEBECK, Germany (R) — German police arrested a Lebanese man accused of setting a lethal fire in a foreigners' hostel after he told a firefighter at the scene of the blaze, "we were the ones," prosecutors said on Sunday.

That comment and the 21-year-old suspect's intimate knowledge of circumstances surrounding the fire that killed 10 people in the northern city of Luebeck on Thursday convinced authorities to focus their probe on him, they told reporters.

But a lawyer for the suspect, identified only as Safwan E., denied the man had made any such comment. The man, who lived in the hostel with his family, has maintained his innocence since he was taken into custody on Friday evening.

"The suspect told a firefighter on the night of the fire, 'we were the ones,'" Prosecutor Klaus-Dieter Schultz told a news conference.

"The suspect had detailed knowledge that only the perpetrator or someone involved in the deed could have known," he added, saying the suspect was able to identify the place on the first storey where the fire broke out.

The suspect's attorney, Hans-Juergen Wolter, took issue with the official account.

"My client never told anyone 'we were the ones,'" Mr.

Wolter said, adding the civil war refugee had only related to a rescue worker what had happened to his father during the fire.

Investigators ruled out the possibility that someone outside the house might started the blaze, the worst catastrophe ever to hit a German home for foreign refugees.

Thirty-eight people were hurt, some badly, in addition to those who died. Investigators left open the possibility that the suspect may have had accomplices, but added no other people were under investigation at present.

A German judge on Saturday night ordered the man placed under arrest on suspicion of 10 counts of murder, 38 cases of attempted murder, and aggravated arson.

Authorities were unable to give a potential motive for setting the fire.

"There were no open conflicts (among residents) in the house," senior investigator Winfried Tabarelli said. But he added that authorities had not ruled out a feud among families as a possible cause for the blaze.

Prosecutors said it would take a few more days to determine the exact cause of the fire, but said it could not have been started by a technical defect.

"There were no technical devices in the area im-

mediately surrounding the place where the fire broke out, so a technical cause was ruled out," Mr. Schultz said.

The blaze started in a place that was impossible for an attacker from outside the house to reach, he said, adding the hostel's door was locked at the time the fire broke out.

German television reported on Saturday night that the arrest caused bewilderment among other residents of the hostel, which housed refugees from Zaire, Togo, Syria and Lebanon and ethnic German immigrants from Poland.

"The man's father says he is innocent and neighbours whom he apparently helped leave the hostel were also asking 'how could this man set the fire and then later help us get out? The whole thing makes no sense,'" an ARD television reporter said.

The suspect's two brothers were also detained for questioning on Friday night, but later released.

Four young Germans were earlier questioned about the blaze, but later released, amid fears that it was the latest in a series of neo-Nazi attacks on foreigners since right-wing violence surged in the wake of Germany's 1990 reunification.

Column 800000

Ghali gets big morale boost

NEW YORK (U.N.)

The spokesman for Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, Sylvana Foa, said

that the secretary-general had a big morale boost last night when, on going through the mail that had piled up while he was on mission, he discovered

cheques and letters from Americans responding to the initiative of the United Nations Association of the United States (UNA-US). She said the secretary-general had been "really quite surprised."

He had shown her a letter from a couple in New York containing a cheque for \$13.20 based on the UNA-US formula that every American's share of

the assessed contribution of the United States to the regular budget was \$4.40. In their letter, Tom and Martha said: "There are just the two of us but our Doberman says he has more peace of mind because the United Nations exists, so he wants to be counted as well."

Ms. Foa said more of the cheques were arriving at UNA-US headquarters, while others were going directly to United States congressmen. About 100 cheques had been received at headquarters, she said, adding that most arrived over the holiday period. Efforts were being made to put together for correspondents a folder with incoming cheques and letters.

Abducted son meets family after 21 years

HARARE (AFP) — A Zimbabwean man, who was abducted from hospital just minutes after he and a twin sister were born, has been reunited with his family 21 years later, the daily Herald reported.

The paper said Wasarevhu Chikandiwa, 21, was snatched at one of Zimbabwe's largest hospitals, Harare Hospital, on June 10, 1974, by a nurse who was unable to have children herself and whisked off to the small town of Zishavane, 300 kilometres (187 miles) south of the capital.

The parents frantically searched for their son but to no avail. Mr. Chikandiwa told the paper he was raised by the nurse and her husband, unaware they were not his real parents. The nurse moved back to her home country Zambia with Mr. Chikandiwa when he was five-years-old, on the death of her husband. But she kept the secret until her own deathbed when she confessed to Mr. Chikandiwa and told him where he might find his family.

He returned to Zimbabwe in 1992, working at farms, but made no effort to find his family until a chance meeting with a man who noted he had the same surname as the man's sister-in-law. The woman turned out to be his twin sister, and one of eight siblings he never knew.

The nurse had been forced to keep Mr. Chikandiwa's real surname, as it had already been noted on his hospital birth record.

Victim escapes after a year in captivity

ZAMBANGA, Philippines (AFP) — A 15-year-old girl Sunday claimed to have escaped from her abductors after a year in captivity, police said. Anne Marie Hugo, barefooted and haggard, was recovered by police Friday in the village of Balowi, Lanao Del Norte province. The girl told the police she had escaped from her kidnappers by dressing as a woman of the local Maranao tribe. Hugo, who was forced into a Christmas Eve in 1994, was reunited with her parents in Cagayan de Oro City, police said.

High election turnout gives Palestinians credible voice

By Jonathan Wright
Reuters

GAZA — The high turnout for Palestinian elections has strengthened Yasser Arafat for future talks with Israel and given the elected council a mandate as the legitimate voice of Gaza and the West Bank, officials said on Sunday.

Ahead of official final results, the commission which ran the poll on Saturday said it appeared that up to 75 per cent of eligible voters cast ballots in the elections for an 88-member legislature and the presidency of an interim government.

"Although he was recognised as the leader during the past 30 years, Yasser Arafat now has a new position. He is the first elected Palestinian leader," said Mahmoud Abbas, (Abu Mazen), head of the Palestinian elections commission.

"His revolutionary legitimacy has been strengthened by the legal legitimacy," he said about the former guerrilla leader. "The message to Israel is to speed up resolution of disputed issues and enable Palestinians to achieve their independence."

Marwan Kanafani, until recently Mr. Arafat's spokesman, said the high vote would "enhance the position of the authority when it comes to the negotiations and this is something that was needed long ago."

Mr. Arafat had hoped for a high turnout to minimise the impression that his peace deals with Israel face widespread domestic opposition.

Under those interim self-rule agreements, he is due to enter into negotiations with Israel in May on a final peace accord, tackling such problems as the future of Jerusalem and Jewish settlements in the West

Bank and Gaza.

Politicians in the Gaza Strip said only the composition of the legislative council would show the extent of the opposition, since many critics of the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) deals either ran as candidates or took part in the voting.

The critics argued that it would be better to have a strong and independent council able to tame Mr. Arafat than to give his Fatah movement a free hand to run the territories.

The big loser must be the Muslim fundamentalist movement Hamas, which decided not to run its own candidates and apparently failed to convince many of its followers that voting was a betrayal of the movement's principles.

Hamas's official position was that its followers were free to do as they chose and Hamas spokesman Mahmoud Al Zahar denied persistent reports that under the counter it had distributed lists of the candidates it favoured.

"Hamas's attitude amounted to political disengagement. Whatever the Hamas leaders say, it must damage the stature of the movement," said a Gaza journalist.

Hassan Al Kashef, a Gazan political activist and writer, said the high turnout pointed to the marginalisation of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the leftist revolutionary groups which were once powerful in the PLO.

The leftists include the Popular and Democratic Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP and DFLP), which oppose the self-rule agreements and which boycotted the elections.

"I believe the elections signal the end of the political instruments which played a part in the Palestinian revolution and the intifada," Mr. Kashef said.

"People are not voting out of political or clanish convictions but for personalities. New political trends will eventually emerge in the Palestinian arena," he added.

Those who saw people fill in their ballot papers on Saturday said it was remarkable how few people voted for party lists wholesale. Anecdotal reports also suggested voters were taking a pick-and-mix approach in their choice of candidates.

The relative newcomers to the scene include the independent democrats who favour peace in principle but oppose the methods Mr. Arafat and Fatah have adopted in running the territories.

The most prominent of those are Haidar Abdul Shafi, former chief Palestinian negotiator, and Hanan Ashrawi, former spokeswoman for the Palestinian negotiating team.

Dr. Abdul Shafi has won a council seat in Gaza and Dr. Ashrawi one in Jerusalem, sources in the election commission said.

Both favoured a high turnout, to make the council as strong and as independent as possible against any attempt by Mr. Arafat to rule the territories and run negotiations single-handed.

One factor behind the high turnout was the unexpectedly widespread voting by women, who in traditional Palestinian society left politics to their menfolk.

But many groups of women went to the polling stations on Saturday without male escorts. Even women wearing the full veil took part in the voting.

"The number of women voting exceeded all expectations. It shows they reject traditional norms and is an indication of the defeat of Islamic ideology," said Mr. Kashef.